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CHRISTY CAREW.

A Novel.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

'HON. MISS FERRARD,' 'HOGAN, M.P.,' 'FLITTERS, TATTERS, AND THE COUNSELLOR,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
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1880.

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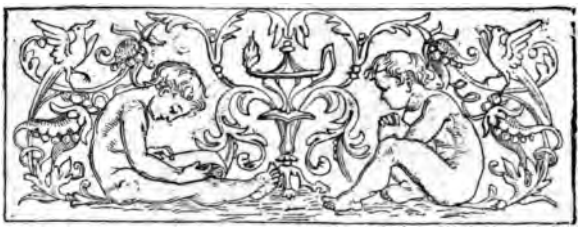
'Es wäre zwei Königs Kinder,
Die hätten einander ſo lieb,
Sie konnten beiſammen nie kommen,
Das Waſſer war viel zu tief.'

HEINE.



CHRISTY CAREW.

CHAPTER I.

'My mistress will be here . . she doth stray about
By holy crosses, where she kneels and prays.'
Merchant of Venice.

'Oh! love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love lives not to have years told.'
Sonnets.

"IF it doesn't clear up at twelve, it is a bad sign; but if it keeps at it after two—no, after three, it may go on for ever.'

This weather-forecast was uttered by Miss Carew, who was standing in the

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the piers were abandoned to the wind and spray, which drenched them liberally.

Miss Carew's remark met with no response from the other inmates of the drawing-room — two small girl-children, aged respectively three and five. One of these was seated under a round table in the corner of the dingy drawing-room, weeping in a subdued manner over a broken doll. The other kept guard over the flies in the panes of one of the windows, and with one grubby finger induced the rain-water, which had forced its way beneath the rickety sashes, over the ledge and down on the carpet. The door was open, and, mingled with the gusts of wind that shook the windows and moaned in the chimneys, there poured in snatches of uproarious song and wild, mocking peals of laughter.

'Very good, Master Lanty!' a female

voice sounded in ironical remonstrance; 'oh, very good! Break the balusters, and see what you'll get!'

'No matter what you do
If only your heart be true,'

sang the voice, which was cracked.

Then recitative:

'You fool, mind your own business! What is it to you if I do break the balustrade, eh?'

'Miss Christy! oh, Miss Christy! for the love of the Virgin, come out an' see what he's at now!'

This rose, in a voice charged with exaggerated terror, to the ears of the young lady in authority. She laid down the book she was not reading, and, reluctantly turning away her eyes from the view that lay beneath her window, rose slowly and walked out of her room.

There was a small lobby before the door, fenced, as is usual, by balustrades, and, curiously twisted in these balustrades, a pair of boots was visible—boots of by no means the most fashionable cut. The owner of these boots was depending from them head downwards over the stairs. His jacket, in accordance with the laws of gravity, had fallen downwards, and was flapping at the back of his head, and there was a wide interregnum between his waistcoat and trousers. His face was very red, and his hair on end. He looked to be anything but comfortable, but chanted and uttered defiance at the full pitch of his voice.

'Lanty,' said his sister, after a careful examination of the balustrade, 'if you break that woodwork there will be something to pay, and you know you have broken a basin and two plates already to-day.'

'Lies! all lies!' was the courteous rejoinder, screamed at apoplectic pitch. 'That Hannah did the basin; and as for the plates, one of them was rotten.'

'Oh! Lord forgive him, Miss Christy! Miss Minna had her sea-an—em——'

'Hay! what?' interrupted the acrobat, with startling and sudden fierceness.

'Enimies, then! How do *I* know what yez be callin' them beasts?'

'Ho, ho, ho! ha, ha! ugh!' shrieked the young gentleman, wild with delight, utterly drowning her voice. He swung himself to one side, and catching hold of a rail, let himself down, and charged after the luckless Hannah, to bait her in her own domain below.

Miss Christy walked back yawning to her window, and putting her hands up high on the middle panes, leaned against the glass, and vainly searched the horizon for a

symptom of broken cloud, or the faintest trace of blue or white, on which to build visions of a clear, dry afternoon. She could discern none, and she turned round disconsolately to resume her book. As she did so, she espied the little yellow head beneath the table.

'Elsie,' she said, 'stop crying. I want you.'

'Oh, my dolly! my dolly!'

There was something so plaintive in the tones, that Miss Christy, although she was phlegmatic of constitution, and not very easily moved, felt impelled to cross over; stooping beneath the round table, she lifted up and dragged out the mourner and the cause of her grief, to which she clung convulsively. It was an ugly doll, with a head of black tow curls, and an imbecile countenance with a wax pimple in the centre, marking where a nose had once been. Lanty knew the secret of that nose.

'Let go, Elsie, till I see what he has done to her.'

Elsie only clung the tighter, and Miss Christy was obliged to loosen her fingers from her doll's neck by force. Off tumbled the head, which had been artistically sawn across with a pair of scissors, on the floor. Elsie turned away her face with a gesture of horror, and burst into frantic sobs.

'Oh! he *is* too bad—I declare he is! Minna, come here. When did he do this?'

Minna removed her finger from the little lake on the window-ledge and marched across the room with alacrity. To 'tell on' Lanty was her chief enjoyment in life, and she at once began in a shrill, quick patter:

'It was just now, down in the dining-room. We were playing "Marie Jan-Tonette" and the dolly was her; and he had mamma's big scissors for the flowers, and just chopped her up; and it was he broke

the basin, and not Hannah 't all. I saw him; didn't you, Elsie? Hannah wanted the basin, and my yemones were in it, and I didn't care, and gave them to her, 'cause one was dead, and the crab had walked away; and he did just that to Hannah——' (Minna imitated a familiar gesture of Lanty's); 'and it's all him.' Then the little informer halted for breath.

Her stepsister, who had been examining the dilapidated carcase critically, shook her head over it, and dropped it on the floor.

'Don't mind him, Elsie; he's a nasty thing. I'll see, maybe, if I can't get you another doll—there now!'

Elsie bent her head despairingly, refusing to be comforted, and remained seated by her broken idol, her head drooped, and two rivulets of tears running down her dusty little cheeks. Minna, the self-righteous,

marched back to her window to revel in visions of Lanty's approaching discomfiture. He had only been home a week from school, and now he was to be whipped —delightful thought! She had often been whipped herself, and wondered how the operation was to be conducted in Lanty's case.

While this scene was going on, a hall-door in a row of larger, bow-windowed houses, situated farther up, had opened, and a tall, slim girl's figure, clad in a blue waterproof, stood for an instant at it, and looked out and up and down dubiously. At last she drew the hood of the waterproof over her head, and, holding it together before her face with one hand, stepped out and pulled the door to behind her. She descended the steps cautiously, and with long, gliding steps crossed the gravel strewn with the *débris* Kingstown residents

love to amass in front of their houses—fish-entrails, vegetable refuse, and such savouries, and, at a pace that was nearly a run, advanced along the terrace. She leaped across a wide pool of rain-water, and came running, wind-blown and tossed, up the flight of granite steps, to the hall-door of the house where this weather-bound party of young people were disporting themselves.

Lanty had found the lower regions too hot even for him. The cook, a crabbed, elderly female, addicted to giving venomous sly pinches to the most feeling portions of the human economy, had joined her forces to those of Hannah, and the equally disaffected nursemaid, and routed the invader. So he had returned to his aërial exercises on the stairs, and was singing aloud to the admiration of the baker, to whom the door had just been opened.

'Tis Master Lanty, the gratest young div——' the cook was explaining, in reply to the baker's inquiry as to whom the odd-looking figure belonged. She stopped hastily, on seeing the young lady.

'Faith, then,' the baker said, 'if he slips his hold it's two of him you'll have. I ax your pardon, miss,' he added, hastily turning round to let in the lady of the waterproof.

'The mistress isn't home yet, miss,' the cook said; 'but if you'll step up to the drawin'-room, you'll find Miss Christina and the childer.'

The young lady passed by, and walking across the mat, was just about to ascend the stair, when she caught sight of Lanty hanging upside down by his feet.

'Oh!' she cried in amazement; 'Lanty! what are you about? Do you want to be killed?'

'Don't be a goose, Esther; just you

come and stand where I can reach you, and see if I'm not able to lift you off the ground.'

The new-comer laughed merrily at this daring proposal, and stooping low so as to keep out of the reach of the hands which he stretched down in the hope of seizing her, ran quickly up the stairs; he managed, however, to reach the hood of her waterproof, which he tipped back, leaving open to view a thick twist of beautiful fair hair—not yellow hair, but that soft, pale brown, flecked with gold, that the French have named *blonde cendrée.*

'Esther O'Neil! who would have thought it?' and Christy forgot her book and her languor, and, jumping up, ran eagerly to meet the new-comer. 'How did you get in? I heard no knock, and oh, is it not a day! and we have Lanty at home, too.'

But this dismal category ended with a laugh. It was as if Esther's advent had driven all things unpleasant away, and there remained only a remembrance of them.

There was some charm about this girl. The little Elsie looked up with a smile through her tears, and Minna released an imprisoned fly from an empty matchbox, and came over to rub herself against Esther's fresh holland dress.

'What ails this little old woman?' said she, sitting down on the floor in front of Elsie, and, taking the tiny chin between her finger and thumb, she turned up the smudged little face and looked at it sympathisingly.

Elsie only sighed; her grief was too deep for words.

'He made a Marie Tonette of her dolly, and chopped her up with the big scissors,

and broke the basin and the plates,' gabbled Minna, vociferously.

She thought Elsie was getting more than her fair share of the stranger's attention, and felt impelled to assert her own claims to notice.

Esther opened a pair of wide blue eyes.

'Sh! Minna; you are troublesome. Ring the bell for Hannah to take you away. You must be washed and dressed for lunch.'

It was much too soon for this, but Christy was tired of her company; besides, she wanted Esther all to herself.

'Lanty has been a perfect trial all morning,' she continued, half plaintively. 'Really, he will be whipped to-night. Mamma will have papa do it—he is altogether past endurance.'

'Yes,' Minna said, 'he *is* to be whipped —whipped with a—a—walking-stick!'

This was the most terrible thing she could think of.

'Oh no,' said Elsie, with a fresh sob.

Lanty had come into the room unnoticed, and was standing by the door with his hands in his pockets, listening to the conversation. He suddenly darted forward, snatched up the doll's head and stuffed it in his pocket, then hoisted Elsie on his shoulder, and, tucking the dismembered body of the representative of Marie Antoinette under his arm, set out for the kitchen, on reparation intent. Minna followed at full speed, and the two girls were left alone.

Christy drew a deep breath of relief.

'There's the way eternally, ugh! Now that his grinding is to begin, I hope we shall have a little peace. Do look at this room.'

As she spoke, she rang the bell, and

desired the servant to put things a little to rights before her mistress's return.

'Is Lanty grinding?' asked Esther; 'and is it with Mr. Sugrue?'

'He is supposed to be—at least, they are to begin directly.'

Christy rather turned her face away at the mention of Mr. Sugrue's name. Esther only smiled, and, putting her arm round her, drew her over to the window.

'Such horrid weather, is it not?'

Christy resumed her pout, as she looked at the rolling grey clouds that the east wind was driving across the sullen waters of the bay. A pout rather became Miss Carew, for that was Christy's patronymic. She was something below the middle height, and had a handsome face. The forehead was perhaps a little too low, but her thick brown hair curled so prettily round it, that the fault was hardly percep-

tible. Her eyes were brown, too, almond-shaped. To most people they had a good-humoured, lazy look, but there was a satirical expression sometimes in them, and they could light up with a fiery sparkle. For the rest, she was trimly built and straight, and her feet and hands were, what they very frequently are not with undersized people, exactly in proportion to her height.

Esther O'Neil, on the contrary, was a little above the middle height, and to see her standing beside her friend, one would say she was a really tall girl. She was slender and graceful, which, if anything, added to her stature. Her features were not as finely cut and proportioned as Christy's, but they were infinitely more delicate and expressive, and her full blue eyes had a charming sweetness. Her complexion was transparently clear, and her

long slender fingers were of a whiteness that filled Miss Carew with an envy that she never hesitated to openly express.

'What is this you are reading?' asked the visitor, taking up the book her friend had let drop. '"Essays"! Oh, my dear, you are improving your mind, I see. Did Father Caffrey recommend you that?'

Christy gave a short, amused laugh.

'Very likely! Do you suppose he chooses my books for me? I should have a limited choice of reading, in that case. No, indeed; it was Mr. Sugrue.'

'Mr. Sugrue! Oh, but he is a Protestant.'

'All the better, too—I mean for choosing books. Come, Esther, I'll have no preaching. He recommends me nothing but the dullest and driest; in fact, the most *improving* sort, and what worse can be said of a book than that? There it goes,' con-

tinued the impetuous Christina, tossing the book on the sofa.

'I pity men,' observed Esther, softly, 'to have to read such things as they do.'

'Do you? That's not my view of it. I envy them. They have something to do, and a good reason for doing it. It's not so with us. Where is the good of our doing anything? There's nothing to come of it.'

'You used not to think that way,' Esther said, opening her eyes wide; 'and you who were so clever at school and who took all the prizes!'

'Ah! just so. I was clever at school, but I never mean to be so again. Then I had something to work for, but here I don't know what to do with myself.'

She laid her forehead against the window-pane in a dejected attitude.

There was silence for a few moments now. Esther broke it by saying solemnly:

'Get married.'

Christy looked up suddenly, and burst out laughing.

'Or,' continued Miss O'Neil, who seemed to be surprised by the laugh, 'enter a convent.'

At this Miss Carew laughed still more.

'Matrimony or the convent is the natural state for all women, so the canon says——'

'Stuff, child! I declare I see a crack in the clouds right over Howth. Maybe it will clear.'

'Esther laid down the book and looked in the direction indicated by the impatient Christy, to weigh the chances of clearing held forth by Howth. She laid her hand, half-caressingly, half-reprovingly, on her friend's shoulder, and they stood an instant in silence, looking out across the dim grey waste of tossing waters. Christy's mobile

countenance, at once impatient and *ennuyée*, contrasted with the more placid thoughtfulness of Esther, who, with a glimmer of amusement in her soft eyes, watched the rift in the clouds across the bay being swallowed in an inky expanse that gave scant hope of the wished-for clearing-up that afternoon.

'There—it's gone! and oh! I say, here comes Mrs. Carew. Won't she be wet?'

Both girls turned their faces sideways to look at an umbrella, under which appeared to view part of a cloaked figure and a pair of high-buttoned boots.

'Where has she been?' asked Esther.

'Mass,' replied Christy, laconically, and with the least possible grimace.

Miss Carew had been born and bred a Roman Catholic, so took things easily, as one who was a Roman citizen by birthright, and rested upon that. She had,

indeed, like all true Romans, the least possible shade of contempt for those who came in, so to say, at the sixth and ninth hour, and claimed their pennies with the rest of the believing faithful who had borne the heats and burthens of the day. Perhaps the believing faithful, the Roman citizens by birthright, are sometimes a little jealous of the attentions and honours, not to say pettings and spoilings, so lavishly heaped on these late comers to the vine-yard, who have idled all their forenoons in the sunny places of the market.

Christy rang the bell quickly, then ran out and called to the servant:

'Take your mistress's slippers into the hall. Her feet are sure to be wet.'

The order was obeyed, and in a few moments Mrs. Carew entered the drawing-room. She was a pretty woman of thirty, who had all the air of being perfectly

aware of her own good looks. She had yellowish hair, prominent light-coloured eyes, and a good fresh skin and healthy colour. Her features were clearly cut, though a little sharp, and she had fat, dimpled white hands and pretty feet. She was a very young stepmother for Christie, a grievance which both of them felt in perhaps equal intensity.

However, something more than six years ago, when Mr. Carew, a thriving and highly respectable solicitor, had proposed to Miss Caroline Poyntsett, the third daughter of a family of four girls, whom the death of their father had left in very bad circumstances, the fact of his having a daughter eleven years old and a son of nine had not prevented Miss Caroline Poyntsett from thinking herself uncommonly lucky. Since then, however, with feminine inconsistency, she had persuaded herself, and her husband

almost too, that she had thrown herself away upon him. Mr. Carew was nearly a quarter of a century older than she was, a fact on which she loved to dwell in her own mind, and which she considered half justified her eternal flirtations.

Her husband gave her her own way in everything, and, as we have said, she received much adulation as a convert. The priests petted and made much of her, and the nuns exalted her as a model of everything at once fashionable and orthodox. Christy was her great trial in life. A step-daughter of such an uncompromising adult appearance could not fail to be a trial to Mrs. Carew. However, they got on apparently very well together. They never had disputes or scenes. Mrs. Carew was too good-humoured and too little thwarted to set herself seriously to disagree with anybody, and Christy, how-

ever well inclined she often felt to express her dissenting views, had sense enough to be silent and pliable.

Mrs. Carew shook hands with Esther O'Neil, then turned to the dingy glass over the mantelpiece and began to stroke down her yellow fringe.

'Well, Miss O'Neil,' she said, 'you arrived yesterday, or the day before, was it? You have brought bad weather with you. St. Swithin's day was wet, however, so we may expect nothing else, I fear.'

Mrs. Carew would never relax the formal Miss O'Neil. Esther and Christy had been schoolfellows since they were small children; but Mrs. Carew, as the wife of a solicitor—a Crown solicitor—and as the daughter of a professional man, considered the O'Neil family beneath her in social status. Her father had been a doctor, and she had been a Protes-

tant, and honestly believed herself still a member of the Ascendency. As it happened, however, Mr. Carew, who had inherited little from his family beyond a good name and some expensive tastes, was far too deep in the books of the O'Neil firm, for his wife to be as dignified as she would have liked. Moreover, Mr. O'Neil was Lord Mayor elect, and Mrs. Carew, like many other better-placed people than herself, had an eye to future Mansion-House festivities.

'It is a dreadful day,' said Esther, shyly. 'I wonder you ventured out to mass, Mrs. Carew.'

Mrs. Carew only smiled in the superior manner of one to whom mass was the first consideration. Like all converts, she was zealous—or, at least, for it was not her nature to be anything long, spasmodically zealous. She would attend forenoon mass

if it thundered and hailed, and then grumble at having to eat fish on Friday, and vote the Church retrograde in matters intellectual and scientific; and again next day she would command a universal novena for her 'intention,' and inform Lanty and Christy that they were following their father to—destruction. An announcement which that trio took, as they did most things, easily and gracefully.

'I wonder where the children are?' she said, turning to Christy. 'Did I not ask you to keep them for nurse this morning?'

'I sent them away to be got ready for lunch—and Lanty has been so vexatious.'

'Ah! If this weather lasts I really shall have to talk to his father seriously about that boy. I can see he has laid himself out to be anything but an angel in the house. Where is he now?'

'In the kitchen with the children,

I fancy,' Christy replied negligently. 'They all went down a little time ago.'

'Oh, some vile mischief is brewing, I have no doubt. Miss O'Neill, you are nearest the bell—do ring!'

'Oh, never mind them, mamma. If they are doing anything out of the way, you may trust cook and Mary to look to it. Lanty broke Elsie's doll, and he is mending it.'

Mrs. Carew seated herself in her own easy-chair, which she had caused to be brought out of town to their seaside residence, and yawned.

'One never thoroughly realises the hideousness of these Kingstown furnished houses till a wet day like this comes: they certainly are contrived for people to live out of. Just look at the whole fitting up of this room—the beauty and fitness of everything—and, above all, the smell. The

sewage here must be dreadful; one does not realise it until the windows are shut.'

'Yes,' said Christy, 'the smell above all things. I firmly believe a murder has been committed at some remote period on these premises, and it's coming out only now. There's the lunch-bell, Esther. Come down with us; I'm so hungry!'

'I am, too. Come, Miss O'Neill. I don't know what we're to get, but let's go down and try.'

Mrs. Carew rose and led the way to the door as she spoke. Christy caught Esther by the sleeve and held her back for a second. Esther looked at her interrogatively, but until Mrs. Carew's skirts had disappeared round the first lobby she got no further explanation beyond that conveyed by a mischievous meaning smile.

'Don't say anything about this evening, Esther. I'll tell you why. Papa

is bringing home two clients to dinner. Lanty has given the mistress to understand that they are everything that is delightful, and—' here she laughed outright —'it's no one but old Tom Macnamara, and Rafferty of Castle Rafferty, all the time. Won't she be sold, and won't she be in a temper? Don't you say anything of our project of to-night, else she'll lay herself out to spoil it. Now!'

Esther looked puzzled, and disapproving too, but Christy gave her no time to speak. She set off downstairs, sliding along the balustrade.

The dining-room boasted little more attractiveness in the way of brightness or sweetness than the drawing-room. It was a long room looking out at the back, through the window, into a garden overgrown with grass and weeds; and at the front, by two more windows, get-

ting a side-glimpse of the harbour, with its autumn plenty of weather-bound yachts and colliers.

'One is always hungry on a wet day,' said Christy, 'and these chops are absurdly small.'

'Do you ever find fine weather to affect your appetite, Miss Carew?' asked her step-mother, a little captiously.

'On fine days one has something else to think about,' Christy answered sweetly. 'Esther, when did you see or hear of Philomena?—Miss Dunne, I meant to say.'

Christy corrected herself hastily. For this she had more than one motive. Her step-mother did not choose to know the person referred to under that name, and Christy chose to humour her.

'She is to be with us this afternoon if it clears, and her mother. Everybody calls her Philomena. I wonder why?'

'That is the young lady who plays so exquisitely, is it not?' said Mrs. Carew, with an artful affectation of not knowing. 'Philomena is such a charming name. That is the poetical name of the nightingale; it is so suitable. Now, if she only sang instead of playing——'

'Philo*mel* is the poetic name of the bird you mention,' corrected her step-daughter, blandly. 'You ought to hear her sister, the nun, sing; that's something divine.'

'Her sister sings divinely! oh, indeed!'

Mrs. Carew spoke in a most condescendingly gracious tone. She knew this item of intelligence perfectly long ago, but she wanted to impress upon Esther O'Neil the idea that she was disposed to be excessively friendly to her and her set—friendly within proper limits, that is; so she smiled at every word with the con-

descending grace of a duchess in an affable humour.

Christy, whom long experience had made familiar with the little lady's whims, was at first amused; then she began to get rebellious, and wished that Lanty, of whom Mrs. Carew was thoroughly afraid, would come in. Lanty was not one to see Esther patronised; and Esther's was one of those rare, sweet natures that could never see below the surface of things, and took everything literally and unquestioningly: gilt gingerbread was always solid gold to her.

At that instant, however, the door opened with a crash, and the children rushed in. Elsie was beaming, and ran straight to her mother to exhibit the doll, whose head, with the aid of a long tin nail and some red sealing-wax, had been replaced in its normal position.

'Look! look!' she cried triumphantly.

Mrs. Carew laid down her knife and fork, and looked scrutinisingly at the rather uninviting-looking object thrust upon her notice. Marie Antoinette's face had been considerably dirtied in the repairing process, and her head had been stuck on rather askew.

'Hannah says she's crooked now,' said Minna, viciously.

Elsie's lips quivered, and she watched her mother's eyes anxiously.

Mrs. Carew laughed.

'She looks quite coquettish, and the sealing-wax will pass for a coral necklace. Now run to your place, darling, and get your dinner. Lanty, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! You, nearly a young man, to tease these children so! Only you are in debt as it is, I would oblige you to buy Elsie a doll.'

'Buy a doll!' Lanty burst out with a sort of yell. 'Do you know for how long my allowance is estreated, ma'am? Fifteen years; and all for a trifling mistake with a little drop of methylated spirits.'

'We won't speak of that, Lanty. To set a room on fire may be a trifling mistake to you, but——'

'It's clearing, really! The sun is actually shining over Howth!'

Christy had left the table, and was taking observations at the window. Her stepmother followed her.

'So it is. Thank goodness! we have a chance of getting rid of Lanty now.'

'Don't let him hear you say so, then, if you want him to go out. Pretend you're dying for his company indoors,' whispered Christy, who was well versed in Lanty's idiosyncrasies. She looked over to where he was sitting beside Esther, trying to

induce her to go out in his boat for a row.

'I should be afraid, Lanty. Thank you, though. Your boat rolls so,' she was saying.

'Rolls! such rot! I mean you make quite a mistake,' he corrected himself impetuously. 'She is perhaps a little bit crank, but there's not a boat in the harbour can sail faster under a lug than that, 'pon my soul! She beat Vandeleur's yacht the day before yesterday——'

'Lanty, I see a man going to the pier with a fishing-rod; it looks like Mr. Westerton.'

Christy said this, wishing Jesuitically to divert Lanty's attention to the fact that the rain was over. He jumped up hastily, but before he reached the window she contradicted herself.

'No, no—it isn't. I thought——'

Lanty took a good look in the direction of the pier: 'That man—eh—that man—yes, I know him; he's captain of the mud barge that dredges in the harbour, and when I next see Westerton I'll let him know who you mistook for him.'

'Do,' said his sister, deliberately; and with every accent of sincerity. 'I hope you will; then they both returned to the table.'

'Lanty dear,' said Mrs. Carew, 'won't you come out with me this afternoon, and Elsie and Minna? We're going up to the Killiney Road; and then come back to the gardens for the band.'

'Can't, ma'am,' was the prompt answer; 'I have an appointment.'

'Where?' asked Christy, who was again at the window, watching the sun chase away the banks of clouds that yet overhung the city, and the long level stretch of Clontarf, with its banks of dark green

foliage, light up under its watery rays. Lanty answered her question by a look of the most intense dignity. Esther was watching him, and laughed.

'Lanty,' she said, half mischievously, 'will you come to the band this evening with Christy and—'

She was not allowed to finish.

'Lanty has an appointment,' said Christy, quickly, 'to go fishing at the end of the west pier.'

'There's elegant drowning at the end of the pier Master Lanty, if you'd only consider it,' put in Hannah, who was attending to the children.

Lanty was leaning against the window-shutter, with his hands in his pockets, gazing with the most impudent air of adoration into Esther's face. She took him playfully by one ear, and turned his head aside gently.

Lanty, who was precociously gallant for his years, seized her hand, and actually kissed it on one finger. She pulled it away with a burst of amused laughter, in which Christy joined, with an ill-natured satirical cackle.

Lanty, for once in his life looking foolish and out of countenance, flew out of the room, and in a few minutes the welcome view of his back was presented, as he walked off down the pier.

'Come along up to my room,' said Christy; 'you will want something to put on your head to go home, and I want to show you some new—— Now, get along Minna and Elsie; you are not to come—you are to go out with mamma.'

CHAPTER II.

'Schwarze Röcke, seidne Strümpfe,
Weisse, höfliche Manschetten,
Sanfte Reden, Embrassieren—
Ach, wenn sie nur Herzen hätten.'

HEINE.

OF a grey evening in the middle of August there is usually little light once eight o'clock is past; and after the tempestuous rain and storm of the forenoon, the heavens seemed inclined to shroud their own mischief as early as possible. The pier was nearly half dark, and the pale light of the gas-lamps was

shining clearly, when the O'Neil and Carew families found themselves in the crowds that thronged about the odd-looking wooden structure erected for the musicians. The tide was out, and the high wind had fallen. The water within the harbour-walls was peaceful, though dirty-coloured: outside it was still angry, and the waves were tossing their white curls with a menacingly far-off growl. The revolving light at the end of the pier became every moment brighter and more wide-reaching, and the spars of the ships and yachts stood out blacker and clearer against the pale cold green and yellow streaks; they marked where the sun had sunk in the west, behind the city smoke. The long terraces facing the sea looked gloomy and dull, and the stucco was stained gingerbread colour by the rain.

Mrs. Carew was chilly, and she wrapped herself tight in her fur coat, and walked

along beside the portly wife of the Lord Mayor elect in anything but an equable frame of mind. The country clients had turned out rather uninteresting, as Mr. Carew's country clients were in the habit of doing—though, in spite of her experience, she was always disappointed—that is to say, they were R.C.'s, consequently of bovine and agricultural appearance and tastes. So she had left them over their wine—so she told Mrs. O'Neil, but in reality it was whisky-punch—and had come down to look after the children. Mrs. O'Neil was a fat, richly-dressed woman of fifty or so, comfortable to look at, kind-hearted in the main, but weak of fibre as regarded everything save her religious tendencies.

'What a raw evening it is,' she said to Mrs. Carew. 'I came down with my cousins, Mrs. Dunne and Miss Dunne; but, indeed, it's that damp under foot

we'd better be walking than sitting. Come, Philomena,' she said, addressing some one seated on a bench near them by the pier-wall. 'We'll walk on; your mamma can stay there and look out for Father Caffrey.'

'How do you do, Miss Dunne?'

Mrs. Carew held out a very grudging hand as she spoke. Miss Dunne, yclept Philomena, extended a cotton-gloved hand in a sidelong timid manner, which Mrs. Carew most gracefully acknowledged. Mrs. O'Neil had already turned, and was moving onwards; but Philomena, who was sensitive, had detected the distant accent of Mrs. Carew's greeting, and held back.

'Thank you,' she said hesitatingly. 'I think I'd rather not.'

The Dublin brogue with which this was pronounced was something ineffable. Mrs. Carew, who had winced not a little at the

prospect of being bracketed with Philomena's yellow bonnet in her progress to the band-stand, assented very agreeably, and moved after Mrs. O'Neil.

'Why didn't ye go, eh?' said an old lady, whose accent bore a strange family likeness to Miss Dunne's, from the bench by the wall.

'Ah! I'll wait till he comes down; maybe he'd like me to take a turn with himself.'

And Philomena, a meek mortal of some two or three and thirty years, returned to her seat under the maternal wing.

'And where are the rest of um? Esther and Miss Carew, eh?'

'Mr. Sugrue and some other young gentlemen are gone with them. What a lovely coat Mrs. Carew had on!' continued Philomena, than whom Mrs. Carew had no more devoted admirer.

'Ay! where did she get that sable——'

But Philomena had spied a burly, black-clad form approaching, and had set off to meet the long-looked-for Father Caffrey. Mrs. Dunne rose from her seat, and offered it to his reverence with all the respect due to a parish priest and canon; but he graciously declined it, and went for a stroll down the pier, attended by the devout Philomena, who felt honoured in the highest degree by his company, and who showed it by her bearing as she walked along.

Mrs. Carew and Mrs. O'Neil meantime had continued their progress together. The last-named lady was stout, and rolled in her walk in a way that contrasted with the nervous, well-poised steps of her companion, whose comportment exactly expressed her frame of mind. The

manner of each lady was peculiar and worth studying. The lady mayoress elect, conscious of her prospective dignity, in addition to the heavy bill due by the Carews, was the least possible shade—not patronising, for that would have been impossible—but, perhaps, independent in manner. She did not turn her head towards her companion as she addressed her; she put more questions to her, and in a broader accent, than she usually did in conversation, and she barely gave her interlocutor time to finish the rather curt contributions she vouchsafed towards the conversation. On her side, Mrs. Carew, mindful of her position and of her superior accent, which implies even more, wanting to be condescending and patronising, and half afraid to be openly impertinent, was calm and self-possessed. She grew more freezingly courteous as the other lady

grew less formal. The conversation ran upon their respective sons.

'Ah!' Mrs. O'Neil said, 'I don't know what his father is thinking of for Nicholas John. I declare the Bar is that expensive: it's all very well if you have relations judges or attorneys, but edication nowadays is no joke. I declare his bills were enough to frighten you; and, oh dear! but they have sent him home that rough and unrefined!'

'Ha! indeed!'

'Yes. Now your Lanty, look at him; oh, he's lovely! Those Protestant schools are so different; but then there's the awful danger of him losing his faith. I wonder you were not afraid of that: oh, I wouldn't risk it for anything. I wanted his father to send Nicholas John to one of the English colleges, but "no," says he; "he's an Irishman, and so am I, and let him not be ashamed of speaking his native tongue."'

'I really think Mr. O'Neil is quite right —quite right; you see, so much more is expected from Leon——'

'Yes,' interrupted the lady mayoress elect, 'I know *we* could hardly pass by St. Patrick's College; but all the same I can't help wishing Nicholas John had got Lanty's ahxent.'

Mrs. Carew was laughing to herself, and waited a moment before replying, lest the laugh should betray itself in her voice.

'Yes,' she said; 'Leonard has not much accent, all things considered.'

Leonard was Lanty's real name, but was used only on state occasions.

Mrs. O'Neil was not so obtuse as not to notice the implied correction, but she thought of the bill that was gathering five per cent. interest and compound interest in the Sackville Street office, so she took no notice.

By this time they had reached the band-stand, and in the middle of the crowd congregated around it found their young people.

Christy was standing close to a lamp the light of which shone in her bright eyes. Every trace of the lassitude and ill-humour of the forenoon was gone, and she was chattering gaily with her companions. Esther was near at hand with Lanty Carew and a young man, on whose arm the latter was leaning, and whose face was hidden by a soft low hat, which he wore slouched over his eyes.

'Here you are at last,' said Mrs. Carew, darting a keen glance at Christy. 'Westerton and D'Arcy! like her,' she said to herself, on recognising her step-daughter's attendants. Then aloud: 'Ah! Miss O'Neil—you have ventured down?'

Mrs. Carew did not or would not see Esther's companions.

Lanty dived past her and began to talk to Mrs. O'Neil. He did not know if his trick, with regard to the country clients, had been forgiven yet, and preferred to watch events from a distance.

'You don't see Mr. Sugrue, mamma!' Christy said sharply.

Whenever Christy wanted to be disagreeable she called Mrs. Carew mamma in public.

'How de do, Mr. Sugrue?' said the little lady, affably.

The young man chose to bow deferentially, and ignore the lemon-coloured kid glove that Mrs. Carew extended to him. As the lamplight fell on his uncovered head, his face, freed from the shadow of the broad-brimmed hat, appeared distinctly. It was, on the whole, a

handsome face, although the features were rather too strongly marked, and the expression seemed a little severe. The chief characteristic of his face was indeed its utter un-Irishness. The mouth was certainly the best and most expressive feature; mobile and clear cut and thin rather than thick-lipped, its silence to those who could read it had a language of its own, that spoke of strength and patience waiting on the intellect that sat enthroned on the broad well-filled brow above.

He was beardless, but the blue tints on his cheeks showed that the absence of that virile growth was due to his own choice or caprice. For the rest, he was a loosely-built muscular-looking man, very carelessly dressed, and slightly stooped about the shoulders.

He was the son of a Drogheda merchant whose ancestors had spelt their name

differently. Varenne de Sousgru had been the founder of the family in Ireland, a Huguenot gentleman who had been exiled for his religion, and who had brought little with him, like most of the *emigrés*, beyond a determined spirit and an upright conscience. This founder of a family left little to his heir and successor; a family habit which seemed, indeed, to obtain with the Sugrues, as they were now called, for the Antony Sugrue with whom we are concerned had inherited not much from his father.

He was about twenty at the time of his parent's death, and had already taken his college degree. His only sister, who was four years his senior, had been, fortunately for her, married in London some time before. Antony found nothing better to do than take a clerkship in Mr. Carew's office, where, for thirty-five shillings a week, he

drudged for nine hours daily. His employer was good-natured, and gave him time to attend the legal lectures in Kings Inns—for the young man was qualifying himself for the Bar—and to make those periodical trips to London, to eat roast beef in the Temple, which seem to be indispensable to the education of a Dublin barrister.

In return for this indulgence on Mr. Carew's part, Sugrue worked after hours in the office, and, when the task of superintending young Carew's studies was entrusted to him, threw himself into it with an intensity and thoroughness that his pupil found highly inconvenient and objectionable. Nevertheless he was almost the only person who had any influence over Lanty, who was as volatile and expansive as his preceptor was solid and reserved.

Mrs. Carew had taken an instinctive dis-

like to him. Sugrue had a way of looking at people with his deep set eyes, as if he read their thoughts and were weighing them in an internal balance, that made her feel uncomfortable. He had committed the additional and unforgivable crime of refusing to admire her, though it is to be feared that Christy, who had chosen, for some inscrutable reason, to take lessons in arithmetic during the three weeks at Christmas that Sugrue was first employed with her brother, did not find him so intractable.

'Lanty!' called Mrs. Carew, suddenly. She saw that Mrs. O'Neil was engaged with her relative, Miss Dunne, and the fat Father Caffrey, and selected that moment to beat a retreat and disengage her party from the civic contingent.

'Here I am!' said her step-son, presenting himself.

He had got back to Esther's side, but she was too absorbed in Sugrue's conversation to pay him the attention he wished, so he moodily obeyed his step-mother's mandate to give her his arm and walk to the end of the pier. She began to walk quickly, and as soon as they were out of hearing of the rest, asked in a cross voice :

'What put it into Mr. Sugrue's head to appear here to-night ?'

'Eh ?' answered Lanty, purposely pretending not to hear her.

Lanty liked Sugrue, and this was his way of showing his dislike of his step-mother's tone of speaking of him.

'You heard me, I think, sir,' she retorted. 'I say, why is Mr. Sugrue here ?'

'I am very sure I don't know,' he rejoined, with dignity. 'He is staying at Kingstown just now—came down for a few weeks.'

'I wonder——' Mrs. Carew began, but she stopped suddenly, and said, in an altered tone, 'When do you begin to grind with him?'

'Umph!' grunted Lanty, 'he is wanting me to begin at once, now he's down here; but——'

'Oh!' interrupted Mrs. Carew, with a joyful accent; 'there's Mrs. Armstrong, I do declare. I might have missed her. Is that the judge walking with her?—no!'

She was off at once to a group near at hand, and Lanty, delighted to be released, rejoined his party. His sister was still engaged with the two young men, to whom it appeared to Lanty that she was making herself ostentatiously agreeable. Sugrue was walking beside Esther, sauntering along meditatively as he talked to her; but it seemed to Lanty most of the talk

came from the lady. His preceptor seemed abstracted or dull.

Finding that he could not induce her to go out in his boat, Lanty, in a pet, went on to his sister, and, out of pure spite, detached one of her cavaliers from her side and carried him off. Christy seemed not to mind, and climbed with Mr. Westerton up to the high path.

'How clever Lanty is!' Esther was saying to her companion.

'Clever, eh?' replied Sugrue, meditatively. 'Well, he has his share of brains, but he is idle and a thorough pickle—just now, anyhow. In another year or so we'll see what he is really.'

Esther looked at him as if she did not quite understand. Sugrue smiled.

'I have my doubts as to Lanty, you see.'

'I know he is wild and—funny,' she

said, 'but I like him. Everybody does, I think. Philomena, Miss Dunne, thinks there is nobody like him in the world.'

'Fortunate Lanty!' said Sugrue, with a laugh, for he was thinking of a black eye of his acquaintance. Then he changed his tone. 'Tell me, Miss O'Neil, if it is your experience that people who are generally liked are ever particularly loved?'

'I do not understand.'

'Look round the circle of your acquaintance. Does it embrace anybody, man or woman, who is liked and esteemed—mind, esteem must go with the liking (there's nothing so chilling to my mind in this world)—by every one? You nod your head. Now, fix that personage in your mind's eye. Is he or she one to whom you would go in distress, in dire affliction, certain of finding sympathy, whole-hearted help and

fellow-feeling, rest and consolation, eh? Do you answer me?'

'N—yes—I declare I couldn't honestly say, Mr. Sugrue,' Esther replied, with a perplexed laugh. 'I never did make any extraordinary demands on my friends in that way. I was thinking of one person—a nun. She is very kind and nice, but she certainly is one of those people who are liked by everybody. She is perfect; if mortal can be perfect on earth, I think Mechtilda is.'

'Mechtilda,' repeated Sugrue. 'I have heard that name before, surely.'

'Yes; you have no doubt heard us talk of her. It is the name of Miss Dunne's sister, the nun.'

'Ah, of course! Well, I say this of your nun perfection: if ever you go to her in trouble and perplexity, real serious trouble, anything that is likely to affect

your happiness for life, you'll be disappointed. First, because she is a general favourite. That limpid transparency of nature that mirrors pleasantly the mood and whim of every one that chooses to project their shadow on it, has never body or depth enough to absorb and hold an entire soul—no, no.' He said this in a musing tone, as if speaking to himself. 'Secondly, she's a nun and a saint. Well, they're sweet, nice things. I suppose I don't know, but I like people that are "not too good," as somebody says, "for human nature's daily food." People with redeeming vices please me best.'

Sugrue had forgotten to whom he was talking. His habit of living alone had given him some odd tricks, and he was apt in conversation to forget everything but his own thoughts.

'Thirdly—eh, what was my third point

of objection? Oh, ah! She's a musician, is she not—like her sister? Yes. Well, it's my experience of musicians, they are just that and nothing else. It must be a wonderful absorbent, music. It seems to suck up brain and heart and all into itself. Musicians are always egotistic, always conceited, and never good for anything but music.'

'Oh, poor things! and how you wrong them, Mr. Sugrue! Why, Philomena is amiability itself; the best-hearted creature.'

'Ay, true! it's her brain that has been absorbed. Her heart has escaped the grasp of the all-consuming—so much the worse for her—music.'

Esther, however, held it to be a sin to discuss people unfavourably; and she fancied she found a slight flavour of depreciation in Sugrue's words. The fact

was he had once lodged next door to the piano-playing Philomena, and had an old grudge against her friend. So, to turn the conversation, she said:

'I should like to know how you would choose a friend to rely upon in need?'

Sugrue pushed back his hat with a sudden gesture and looked at her for a moment; then he said in a queer, dry tone:

'The best-known recipe for preparing cucumber is to pare it and slice it, then salt and spice it; and lastly, when it is ready for eating, throw it away.'

Now they were at the foot of the steps at the end of the pier, just under the battery-wall. Sugrue, as he finished his—to Esther—utterly irrelevant and incomprehensible parable, stepped to one side to allow her to pass up first. She looked in his face as if she hoped to decipher his

meaning thereby; but the shadow of the high walls was lying where they stood, and she saw only the bright gleaming eyes beneath the brim of his hat. She mounted the steps in silence, and he followed her.

When they got to the top they crossed the path and stood on the top of the sloping beach or rampart, and looked out at the dull grey expanse below them. The wind had fallen at sunset, but the waves, though they had lost their ally, still beat with dull and sullen impotence on the black, weed-clad rocks that fringed the walls. No sound came over the waters but the hiss of the wave-crests as they broke into froth, and their dull ebb and flow. Christie and Mr. Westerton were seated not far off below, but their voices could not be heard. The moon had risen, but was shrouded behind a pale, watery

cloud, and only a luminous circle in the sky, and a corresponding brightness in the water beneath, gave token of its presence. A great black cloud was piled in the west, and at its edge gleamed a few cold, pale stars.

The fishing boats were creeping one by one through the harbour mouth, and out to sea; their dun sails disappearing eerily into the blackness. They looked like huge night-birds flitting noiselessly by in the dark, and vanishing without a sound or sign. Far behind, the town lights were gleaming; the great hotel showed a brilliant glare, and the terraces rose one after another from what seemed almost the water's-edge. Nor was the harbour dark; the yachts had mounted gleaming lanterns, that seemed to link them with the brighter glare of the town, and swung and rocked to the pulse of the tide. Far down the

pier they could see the black swarm of people crowded round the bright spot of gold and scarlet that glowed in the surrounding darkness, and a faint distant sound of the music was carried to them on the wind.

Sugrue did not speak; he seemed in a reverie, and with his hands in his pockets gazed moodily out to sea. Esther did not feel inclined to take up the tangled thread of conversation. He had always puzzled her, and she did not know him long enough nor intimately enough to feel that she might ask him to explain his meaning. Lanty presently appeared on the top of the steps; his companion had left him. He looked round for his sister, and espying her seated on a rock below, Mr. Westerton standing near her, made straight for them. He sat down close to her, and bending so as to divert his voice into her ear, said:

'I think you had better go up to Esther.

It's hardly civil the way you are treating her; and I think you are making a regular ass of yourself to-night.'

Christy flashed her eyes at him.

'Go out of that! and you have been smoking again, Lanty.'

'What makes you so rude to Sugrue?' he continued. 'I'd be ashamed of myself.'

'Don't torment me. Sugrue, indeed! Just look at his coat—what does he mean by wearing such clothes?—and that hat! I really think he looks like a tradesman on Sunday.'

'You do—do you? Then I can tell you you're no judge. Westerton, I say!' and Lanty raised his voice now, 'did my sister tell you who she took for you to-day? The captain of the dredger: you remember the chap was swearing at us on Saturday for fouling his cable. I didn't observe the likeness on that occasion.'

Then he rejoined Sugrue and Esther.

Lanty, as we said before, liked Sugrue, and he was angry with Christy for not being more gracious to his friend. She had not seen him since Easter, for it was only when Lanty was at home that his father's clerk ever came to the house, and Lanty knew too that Christy liked Sugrue. That Sugrue could care more for Christy than any other girl never entered her brother's head. Like all boys, it was a wonder to him how any man could see anything in his sister; but he chose that she should esteem his friend. It is very probable that mixed through all this was a current of anger that Esther O'Neil should be so engrossed, as she evidently was, with his preceptor.

The party descended the steps, and Lanty walked close beside Esther, keeping Sugrue, who indeed was thinking but little

of the matter, as far from her as possible. Christy followed at a distance with Mr. Westerton.

'Lanty!' said Esther, after a while, 'who is Mr. Westerton?'

'I know him,' replied Lanty, in a deliberate tone, as if that assertion were ample voucher for the personage under consideration. 'He's a chum of Longleat's. Comes from Limerick. Niceish sort of chap. He intends to go into the army.'

The army was Lanty's own ambition, but he had never dared even to speak of it to Sugrue.

'Very nice looking, is he not?'

Esther spoke to Sugrue, thinking that she must say something to him.

'Very,' he replied abstractedly; 'very nice looking.'

'Here comes mamma,' said Christy,

hurriedly from behind, 'with Mrs. Armstrong and her niece, and there's Mr. Neville Jocelyn, the aide-de-camp, with them—oh!'

Further explanations were stopped by the approach of the party.

Mrs. Carew was walking beside a gentleman, of whom the darkness allowed nothing to be seen but a tall, straight, black silhouette against the pale greyish horizon, when the sun had set in the sky. Miss Armstrong, the judge's niece, was on Mrs. Carew's other hand; and, besides her, Mrs. Armstrong. Mrs. Carew seemed in good spirits, and encountered the party of young people with a very different manner from that with which she had quitted it half an hour before.

The two groups amalgamated directly. Lanty, for whom middle-aged ladies had sometimes an attraction, despairing of

being able to detach Esther from Sugrue, fell into line beside Mrs. Armstrong. Her niece made an unsuccessful attempt to retain Mr. Jocelyn at her side. Mrs. Carew out-generalled her, with the acquiescence of the young man himself; and Miss Armstrong, a little vexed, yet not so much as if the victor had been Miss Carew, was obliged to be content with the share of Mr. Westerton's conversation which that young lady allowed to her.

Sugrue and Esther O'Neil, whose existence seemed to be forgotten in the excitement caused by the new-comers, walked on in advance.

'You know, of course, who those ladies are?' Esther said timidly.

'I do not—of course,' Sugrue added to himself, and he looked at her interrogatively.

'Judge Armstrong's wife'—Esther's

mother would have said 'Judge Armstrong's lady'—'and niece. They are staying at the hotel. I thought you, as a lawyer, would have known them.'

Sugrue uttered a short, amused laugh.

'I could not presume to know such dignitaries by sight even, I assure you, Miss O'Neil.'

The notion seemed to tickle him immensely.

'Ah!' said simple Esther, 'you are not —not a barrister yet, then?'

Sugrue's composed manner made her timid always; nevertheless, she liked to talk to him. There was an attraction for her in his quiet, grave manner; it gave her, who was one of the few people he ever conversed with, a sense of rest, and almost pleasure. He spoke to her without any of those efforts at jocularity and complimentariness that were so fatiguing usually. Esther was always surprised that Christy

seemed to prefer almost anybody else's to Sugrue's companionship. There was also something almost complimentary in this attention on his part, to which she was not insensible—for the reserved, studious Sugrue eschewed acquaintances of all sorts.

'No, not just yet. I have three months' bondsman's service before I may claim my reward.'

Sugrue began to think that he would like to get back to his attic in Glasthule, and to a bulky volume entitled 'Heron on Jurisprudence,' which was lying open on the table there.

'You work too hard, I think, Mr. Sugrue,' said Esther. 'It can't be good to be always at your books. You take things too seriously.'

Sugrue clasped his hands behind his back.

'Work,' he repeated. 'Humph! It is hardly to be called that now. It is my

second nature, I think; for I don't know how to do anything else, it seems.'

He cast a grim look at the group to the left of them. By this time they were all standing on the outer edge of the crowd that was congregated by the band. Esther turned round, and looked at him with that expression of tenderness and compassion that was the great charm of her face. The idea of being compelled to work was in itself undesirable, if not actually pitiful; but that any one should come to like it habitually seemed to her an anomaly amounting almost to disease.

'But, Mr. Sugrue, people, I am told, become odd—eccentric, at least, if they live so differently from other people; that is, if it goes on too long, you know.'

Her tone got apologetic as she finished; she felt a very great desire to ask Sugrue to come up to their house with the rest of

her party, the Dunnes and Father Caffrey. Philomena was to play after tea, and the music at least might please him—Esther felt sure on that point alone, for she had doubts as to his assimilating with the canon—but she felt afraid to carry out her resolve. When away from Sugrue, Esther always felt a sort of compassion for him: she thought him a gentleman, and she knew he was poor, and that he lived to himself; but, whenever she met him, there was something exhaled by his presence that numbed her power of putting her intentions into effect.

'Quite true, Miss O'Neil. Indeed, I have been taking note of many eccentricities of mine of late.' Sugrue spoke very gravely. 'But you know it is arranged now that I am to give a good deal of my time to our friend Lanty, and I think we shall learn a great deal from each other.'

She did not answer. Some stir in the group of which Mrs. Carew was the centre attracted her. She heard her own name pronounced in an audible half-whisper, and turning round, found that Mrs. Carew was in the act of designating her by name to her companion, the young stranger who had come with the Armstrongs.

The music had ceased, and the crowd was just in the act of movement. A clear, well-lit space intervened for a second between Esther and the stranger, and she glanced timidly at him. His head was bent to catch the explanation with which Mrs. Carew found it necessary to supplement the name she had obliged him with; but his face, a young and very handsome one, was turned full in her direction, and Esther's eyes met his—blue, bright eyes, two or three shades deeper in colour than her own—for one second. Sugrue, who had fits of omniscience

at times, had seen this—had seen and guessed the import of the explanation.

Mrs. Carew's very bonnet had an expression of deprecation, and he looked at Esther as if to propose that they should continue their progress. She walked on of her own accord, mechanically, and without looking at him. She turned away her face towards the sea, and he, watching her interestedly, observed her draw a deep sigh, broken as if by a shiver. This sigh he put down to a mistaken cause. He thought it was due to some intended slight on Mrs. Carew's part, which Esther might have seen and taken to herself. But he was perfectly wrong. Esther never saw when offence was meant, and was just as incapable of giving it; and she would have been utterly unable to assign a cause for the sudden chill and depression that came over her.

CHAPTER III.

'Knowledge first begets benevolence,
Benevolence breeds friendship, friendship love.'
BEN JONSON.

'BEGIN again at "*Ergo exercentur pœnis* — therefore they suffer pains;" it is perfectly clear you have got these up with the crib.'

'Ya-ah, Sugrue! I can't. Can't you get ready to go to the O'Neils'? I am sick of this old stuff—there goes for Anchises' catechiz.'

Lanty closed his Virgil with a snap of

its cracked old leather cover, and hurled it across the room—no great space—and on his preceptor's bed.

'Take the Euclid then,' said Sugrue, without showing the least concern of face or voice, 'and see if you can manage that problem to-day;' then he turned over a fresh page of the law book he was engaged on, and pursued his course impassively, marking here and there with a red pencil the salient points which it was needful for his memory to retain.

Lanty thrust both hands into his hair, and rubbed it all up on end, groaning out loud the while with impatience and bad temper. He shot a rebellious glance at his tutor, but the glance fell harmlessly on Sugrue's thick black hair, for his face was bent immovably on his book, and his whole attitude expressed only patient, laborious endurance. Lanty grunted resignedly,

and then betook himself to the consideration of the problem. After some ten minutes of absolute calm, Sugrue raised his eyes—tawny grey eyes, with flicks of orange colour in them—and surveyed his pupil scrutinisingly. Having satisfied himself that he was really working, Sugrue, who knew the boy's moods, rose, and putting his book in its place on a shelf, turned to the window and looked out. It was easy to see that unless engaged with a book in that chamber, the only thing else to be done was to look out of window. It was an attic room in the roof of a thatched cottage, and might have measured ten feet at its broadest and longest. A wooden stretcher-bed filled up all one side save a place for a Windsor chair, which Lanty had advanced a little from the white-washed wall, and these, with a companion chair, a table with a basin and ewer, and a cracked

looking-glass of some six square inches, formed the whole furniture of the room.

Sugrue's wardrobe depended from nails driven in the back of the door, and his valise stood on one end in the grate. A tiny enough hutch for a solitary human being, and now, with a pair wedged in it, looking infinitesimally small. It was thoroughly clean and orderly, however. The coastguardsman's Scotch wife, who owned it, had something more than the rudimentary notions of sweetness and wholesomeness possessed by the other lodging-house keepers of the district; the flooring, bare save for a mat or two, was perfectly clean, and the linen of the bed snow white. Through the window, of which the tenant had removed the whole frame of four panes, came pouring in a current of sweet heather-scented air from the Dublin mountains behind. There was no smell of the sea

here—none of that 'savour of tar nor of pitch' which greeted the nostrils a half-mile to the westward. A honeysuckle was trained on the wall below, and a faint rich perfume came up from it.

Sugrue leaned out and looked into the garden behind the house. Not much of a garden, indeed. Nasturtiums and a stray dahlia and great trees of fuchsia varied the monotony of cabbages and potatoes, which sent up long straggling stalks beneath the shade of a couple of old apple-trees. There were no walls, however; nothing broke the stretch of uninterrupted green, varied by a patch of yellow oats, that spread to Killiney and the lead mines. He could see the last rays of the sun light up the slope of Killiney and the fissures in the red crags of the quarry. Presently the golden shade stole upwards and away off the hill-side, and a warm purplish haze took its

place for a few moments, to be succeeded by a pale dull brown. The sun had set now; and the August evening began rapidly to darken.

After a few minutes Sugrue took a candle from the chimney-piece, lit it, and set it before the student. Then he filled his black pipe, and sitting down again, resumed his book. His pupil worked on in silence, and save for the occasional turning of a page, or the rustle of a moth or daddy-longlegs, attracted by the candle from without, the silence was perfect. At last Lanty made a furious scratch with his pen, dashed it into the inkpot with violence enough to split the point, and handed Sugrue a sheet of paper covered with blotted hieroglyphics and cabalistic figures.

The preceptor ran his eye over it, and murmured:

'At last! Now we'll go back to the "Æneid," please.'

'Oh, come now, Sugrue! Look at the hour it is, and I promised them I wouldn't be later than eight; you know every one from Dublin has to go back at half-past eleven, and it's just eight now. What the —the dickens ever brought me here at all to-night?' he grumbled, getting up and reaching from the bed the tattered Virgil. 'You haven't one bit of feeling in your composition.'

'Take the dictionary and find out every word honestly. I don't believe in construing done out of a crib, you know,' was the answer of the remorseless mentor. 'Ask me if you find a difficulty. Sooner you get done, sooner you go.'

Some muttered irreverence was the reply to this, but rebellion was bootless, and until a quarter past eight neither of them stirred.

Then a searching examination was undergone by Lanty, and, having satisfied his teacher, the studies were pronounced at an end for that evening.

Lanty celebrated the deliverance by battering the long-suffering Virgil against the wall. Sugrue relaxed his distant stony expression, and having knocked the ashes out of the black pipe against the window-sill, proceeded to take off his short reefing jacket, the same which had excited Miss Carew's reprobation the evening he had formed one of the party on the pier.

'That's right,' said Lanty, approvingly; 'I was afraid you weren't coming.'

Sugrue had his coat in his hand. Still, when Lanty said this, he turned it round and surveyed it with a comical expression of face.

'What brings me there, I wonder?' he

said. 'It is the first time I have been out of my own den for years.'

'Time you began, then,' said Lanty. Where do you keep a comb and brush? I want to curry down my head. We'll have some real good music. Philomena's down, and Father Paddy Mac and his fiddle; so hurry.'

Fifteen minutes later brought them within view of the O'Neils' mansion, a large white-stuccoed, bay-windowed house in one of the best terraces facing the bay. The windows were all open, and a great wave of light and voices, with a soft and harmonious undercurrent of music, seemed to pass out on the air and greeted them as they approached.

'One would think it was a Sunday,' said Lanty, sneeringly, as a loud, strident laugh rose above and drowned the accompaniment for an instant. 'Mrs. Armstrong

was complaining to Mrs. Carew the other day that the O'Dowdas had taken the house next theirs, and they gave a concert every Sunday evening.'

'What?' said Sugrue, absently.

'Well, the piano-whackings of Sundays, and dancing; and the walls of those new houses are so thin, you might as well be in the room with them at once. The Dowdas must be an awful lot to live next to, as far as Sabbath diversions go. Half a dozen priests to dinner, and music and dancing regular.'

'Very inconsiderate,' Sugrue said; 'they ought not to outrage their neighbours' sensibilities like that.'

Sugrue believed that the Dowdas had a right to do what they liked. However, he always looked at things from both sides.

'Pah! sweeps! What could you expect

from that lot? The canon is here, by all that's ominous!' whispered Lanty, as they went upstairs. 'You have not seen him yet.'

They found themselves now in a largish drawing-room, in which a number of people, informally costumed, were sitting, standing, and lounging. A back-drawing-room seemed to be the centre-point of attraction for the younger members of the company. Sugrue was presented to the master and mistress of the house. Mrs. O'Neil extended a cordial welcome to her pet, Lanty, and his friend; her husband shook hands gravely with both.

Hugh O'Neil, lord mayor elect, was a peculiar-looking and very uncommon specimen of his class. Tall and gaunt of figure, he carried himself with a dignity and erectness that with a great many people passed for distinction. Distinction, however, it

was not ; though, in contrast with the provincial and overfed clumsiness of his surroundings, it might have passed for such. Certainly, it may be conceded of his physiognomy that it was at least unusual and full of character. There was nothing of the stamp of the other faces in the room about it. He had neither the double chin, with pendulous chops on either side, glazed and high-coloured, with moist, uneven surface of retreating forehead, nor the narrow, close-set eyes, that alternately express calculation and vacuity. O'Neil's face was pale, lean, and hard ; the forehead high and narrow at the brows ; the lips thin, close-locked, and severe. The nose, at a distance, looked large and bold of outline ; nearer, the nostrils were narrow and their curves unfinished, and the bridge flattened and, so to say, deformed. His head, thickly covered with iron-grey hair, was slightly

stooped between the square, lean shoulders.

He turned a pair of dull-coloured eyes on Sugrue's retreating figure, and from him sought his wife's face with a questioning movement of his shaggy eyebrows. She advanced her head, and first glancing to see that the personage in question was out of earshot, murmured, with a meaning nod :

'Mr. Sugrue — yes, that's him — Mr. Sugrue—hum !'

'A Protestant name,' said the lord mayor elect, again glancing after the youth.

'A Protestant name, certainly,' said Canon Caffrey, beside him; 'and there aren't many Sugrues now. I recollect one of the name in Mayo. And he was shot. Louth, I think, they all come from.'

'Protestant-looking too—yes,' added a Mr. Dowda, who was one of the circle

standing round. 'He is a clerk of your friend Mr. Carew's.'

'A very steady, good young man, I'm told,' said Mrs. O'Neil, with a deprecating glance at her husband.

He took no notice of her statement, which was indeed quite beside the question. Sugrue was a Protestant, and the goodness and steadiness of Protestants, as every one knows, is neither here nor there with the orthodox of whose school was Hugh O'Neil.

The chief magistrate elect was one of a class—now by no means numerous, and, happily, fast passing away—of rigid, uncompromising—that is to say, merely logical—Catholics. Faith was with him before everything else in the world. Whether he loved it or his country best would be hard to tell, for with many people Irish and Catholic are synonymous terms, and he certainly

was nationalistic in the strongest sense of the word. His imagination revelled in visions of the magnificence and wealth of his country before the Union; but it may be doubted whether, if repudiation for one moment of one dogma, no matter how novel or unnecessary, would restore the splendours lost by the Act of 1800, Hugh O'Neil would not sacrifice them anew. As for those who differed from him in matters religious, *non raggionava di lor;* more, he did not even 'look at them' (for indeed close inspection is disapproved). He ignored them as much as possible. True, he had not yet lost the habit, so common in Ireland for a certain period precedent and subsequent to Emancipation, of talking of, and indeed approving, certain qualities of individual members of the Ascendency known then as Liberality and Toleration, but which have vanished clearly and utterly since the

Disestablishment. Astronomers tell us that the light from certain far-off stars continues to shine to our eyes long after the bodies from which it took its source have crumbled into extinction and become nought; and so names survive, an empty inheritance from past ages, long after the things they once stood for have ceased to exist.

Hugh O'Neil, of course, had business dealings with many Protestants, and indeed was reported to have said that he preferred them to his co-religionists in point of regular cash payments and methodical keeping of accounts. The faithful, being assured of the one thing needful, are rather given to laxness in matters of every-day details; whereas the others, whose kingdom is by the highest authority pronounced to be of this world only, lose no opportunity of consolidating it, so far as thrift and industry, and those commercial qualities which are

included under the term regularity go. This, in his eyes, was quite as it should be; and the heretics reaped their reward in the shape of wealth and its concomitants, without in the least inspiring envy or a desire to do likewise in him. 'They are permitted to have these good things in this world because they *can* have nothing in the next. Then it will be our turn,' say the faithful, contentedly, and jog on in the old ruts.

In the back-drawing-room was the piano, a grand of Broadwood's sweetest tone, whose notes had reached Lanty and Sugrue without the house; and clustered about it were a half-score young people.

Christina Carew, who was dressed in white, which threw her rich colouring into relief, appeared to be the centre-point of the group, each member of which seemed to be perfectly at his ease.

There were two priests, young men both of them; one busy tuning a violin, the other humming an air from a sheet of music which he held in his hand. They were at the piano before which was seated Miss Dunne, every now and again playing a chord or two for the assistance of the violinist, who was taking the same pitch preparatory to playing a duet with her.

Esther was engaged with a stranger, an Englishman and a guest of her father's. He was a Manchester manufacturer, who visited Ireland sometimes on business. Though only thirty-six years of age, he was very bald, and he wore an eyeglass, which he had a vexatious trick of dropping during conversation. That he was English was visible at the first glance, before he spoke even; it was some air of conscious superiority about him, a questioning look

accompanied by something condescending and premeditatedly amiable. He was amiable certainly, and by no means stupid to talk to, provided that there were no ladies present, and that he could be induced to quit his hobby, Darwinism.

He was at this moment, to Sugrue's intense amusement, busily engaged in shocking Esther by exposing to her without reserve his own ideas on religious subjects. He admired Esther, she had a sweet face, was tall and graceful, and very richly dressed. She was well brought up and religious; and he approved of religion for women—it kept them in order, and made one sure of them. He had intellect enough for two, and a wife of that sort is always a pleasant and stimulating tonic of comparison—a grindstone always ready to whet the blade of a superior masculine reasoning intelligence.

'Come now, Miss O'Neil,' he was saying, 'I put it to your sense of justice and honour. Consider the case of Jael and Sisera. Do you not think that an odious piece of treachery on Jael's part?'

Esther turned her eyes in a perplexed beseeching manner on Sugrue's. To tell the truth, Jael and Sisera had very little interest for her. She had almost entirely forgotten their history, probably had never known it.

Erudite Mr. Dawson had forgotten to take what one of his prophets called the personal equation of his audience; had he done so, he might have chosen a topic more adapted to a convent-trained Roman Catholic, whose acquaintance with Old Testament lore is confined usually to the leading facts of the first chapters, or so, of Genesis, and a few anecdotes, chronologically arranged, about the chief personages of

the subsequent decades of centuries. He had been accustomed to English girls, who are of course acquainted, more or less, with Scripture, and to whom Darwinism, tempered with an income variously stated from five to fifteen thousand a year, was in many cases not wholly objectionable. Mr. Dawson was looking at Esther admiringly, having dropped his eyeglass, and was waiting for her reply.

Sugrue, who had drawn a little aside, but who was listening, half-amused, half-irritated, came to her rescue. It was done out of pure good-nature, and quite needlessly, for the philosophic gentleman was much too absorbed in himself to calculate the effects of his words of wisdom on other people; he did not see that Miss O'Neil was at a loss for his meaning, and indeed she was actually collecting herself to tell him so honestly. He only saw that

she was shocked, which she was too, in great part, for she divined the drift of his conversation, and he was too delighted at his success to care whether she replied to his question or not.

'Read by the light of our most modern morality, it would seem so, Mr. Dawson; but it is pretty generally conceded now that we ought not to measure the actions and motives of that age of the world by our code of honour. Every age has its distinctive virtues and vices.'

Sugrue, as he spoke, placed himself right in front of Mr. Dawson. He had pretty accurately taken the measure of the philosopher, who was indeed one of that very numerous class of men who, imperfectly educated and trained, insignificant and discontented to be so, adopt some idiosyncrasy of the leading man of the hour—wear his livery, if we may so say, in the belief that

they get credit at the same time for his erudition. It is impossible to go through a university course without being able to recognise the type ever afterwards. Mr. Dawson started slightly, and put up his eye-glass at once. He really was a little short-sighted.

'If we allow that the virtues of Jael, Judith, and ever so many more of the personages of the Old Testament are not virtues according to our modern lights, why should they continue to be revered? I think this indiscriminate Bible-worship most useless and mischievous.'

'Ah, well! but why waste your arguments on people who don't require them? What have these Roman Catholics to do with the Bible? Get at the Evangelicals, I recommend you. They really want enlightenment, and may be able to *argue* with you. It is only loss of time to talk

to an R.C. on these matters. They won't listen to you.'

'I know that. It is astonishing what an influence these men'—indicating the two priests by a motion of his head—'have over the whole country.'

He looked round as he spoke, with a semi-mysterious, semi-conscious glance. What he saw would be difficult to tell, for certainly there was very little to suggest the mysteries of the Grand Inquisition or any other stock Popery bogies in that room.

The priest with the violin had finished tuning it, and was now amusing himself playing over the quadrille with Miss Dunne, breaking down every now and again, for he was playing by ear, and talking and laughing at the same time. The other priest had laid down his song on the piano and gone into the other room,

to wait there until the quadrille should be finished.

Twice did Philomena and her reverend accompanist play over the first quadrille. Couples could not be found to dance it; and Esther was in despair.

'I do not know what to do!' she said plaintively to Lanty. 'So long as the Canon and Father Desmond and Father Macklin are here they can't dance fast, and they all hate quadrilles. Mr. Dawson, will you not dance? this one only, please? because, you know, if they think they are in the way they will go, and I should not like that.'

'Quadrilles are sanctioned—therefore detested,' replied Sugrue. '*I* will, if you can't find anybody else. You are very good. I want to vary the music, for Philomena will be so tired. Father Macklin has no pity on her.'

This was plain, for at that very moment Father Macklin was shouting, 'Time, time!' to the musician, and rapping her shoulder with the bow of his instrument; and while Esther was collecting and marshalling the couples, Philomena and his reverence practised the music together. When they tried the second quadrille, however, he could not manage the music, and, laying down the violin, retired to the other room.

Sugrue, seeing the coast clear, sauntered over to the piano to speak to Miss Dunne. She was an insignificant little personage, fair-haired and thin, with tiny bony hands, which, when she was not playing, she kept habitually clasped in her lap. There was a mild resignedness in her large prominent blue eyes, which were purely unobservant and candid of expression.

She seemed a little frightened at his approach, and blinked tremulously.

'I have heard much about your music. I am very fond of music—under certain conditions,' said Sugrue; 'and I have been looking forward to hearing you play to-night.'

Miss Dunne looked nervous, and struck a chord or two instead of replying. Sugrue waited, but the musician found nothing to say to him. He went on:

'I am told that your sister sings very remarkably.'

'Sister Mary Mechtilda!' said Philomena, looking up with a glance of animation for a second. 'Oh! do you think so?'

'Hem! I have not had the pleasure of hearing her, but——'

At this point Esther, who had at last marshalled her quadrille, intervened.

'Philomena, I'll play. You know you have so much to go through yet. Mr. Carew, you will dance with Miss Dunne. Do, Lanty,' she whispered, entreatingly, 'and I'll give you one later on.'

Lanty, who had made a fearful grimace at the prospect of the exchange, professed his willingness; but Miss Dunne refused positively to be relieved from the burden of playing. She was not in the least tired. She would much rather play. The idea of Miss O'Neil's consideration almost overpowered her, and she broke into a spirited set of quadrilles with a touch to which gratitude and emotion lent new fire and energy. Lanty dragged his partner back to her place in glee, and Sugrue was left to his meditations beside the piano.

'Why don't you dance?' asked Miss Dunne, timidly.

She turned her head aside and looked at

him; meantime the music went on with the precision of mechanism. Sugrue wondered at her mastery of the art.

'I don't care to. How do you manage that, I wonder! Do you like playing for dancing?'

'No. I don't like dance music at all, but it is always so convenient to be able to play.'

'What music do you like best? Mozart, Mendelssohn, Beethoven?'

Now Mozart, to Philomena, was commonish, being played at mass every, or nearly every, Sunday, in consideration of the needs of amateur singers, whose *repertoire* of sacred music is generally limited. Beethoven was her great musical divinity, and Philomena played the sonatas with precision and skill, hardly with feeling; for to give those great melodic poems their due requires a range of emotion beyond hers.

Mendelssohn's songs without words she played well. She had been to hear Rubenstein one day, and came home scandalised to think that power of the first magnitude like his should be expended on Chopin and Litz, whom she looked on as mere vicarious musical comets, dazzlingly brilliant for a short space, but hardly worthy of serious attention as compared with the great fixed stars of the musical firmament.

Nevertheless she had learned, at Esther O'Neil's instance, a goodly number of the works of the first-named, and liked them too, but always with a sense of their irregularity. She was a pure Conservative in music, and, had she been present, would have sympathised heartily with that denizen of the top gallery who, on the occasion of Tannhaüser's first representation in Dublin, demanded a 'hurroo for Bellini.'

'I don't know what I like best; when I get at a good piano it's nearly all the same to me. I think if I owned this I'd never leave off.'

Sugrue was watching the dancers now. Christy had fallen to Mr. Dawson's lot, and he was as fascinating and engaging as possible to her. All the time, however, an unprejudiced onlooker might have seen that from above and below his eye-glass he was taking furtive glances at the young lady of the house, who, with her tall, handsome boy cavalier, was occupying a modest place at the side. Miss Christy, notwithstanding, was talking most amiably, and, Sugrue said to himself, without a bit more warmth or interest, than to the three young men with whom she was busy when he arrived.

He leaned his elbow on the grand piano and forgot the music and Philomena's

quaint, half-melancholy attempts at conversation, and resting his chin on his hand, looked musingly at the scene.

Lanty's bold eyes were dilated with joy, and he was chattering to Esther, who lent him an amused attention. Sugrue's eye dwelt on her slight, tall figure as she moved gracefully through the dance. She had a blue ribbon twisted in her brown hair, and it seemed to light up the golden reflection of the beautiful coil which she had plaited low on her neck. She was smiling at Lanty's drolleries, but Sugrue fancied there was a pensiveness and an absent look in her eyes he had not seen before.

'What a contrast between her and my pupil,' he thought. 'It is "*Au jour le jour*," with her, plainly. May it be always so!' he breathed, meeting for an instant a look from Christy's laughing eyes.

Christy was indeed in high spirits. Mrs. Carew had been invited, but had been obliged to dine at Judge Armstrong's, where, her step-daughter guessed, she intended to enjoy herself after her fashion, for she had dressed with an unusual care before going. In any case she would not have come to the O'Neils'. She would have accepted, but at the last moment would have had a headache, or an excuse of some kind ready. So long as she had 'the children,' as she persisted in calling Miss Carew and her brother, she never cared how she evaded invitations that promised none of the attractions she affected.

The quadrille was over; some of the couples went out to the lobby, and others to the open window. Sugrue joined the last. Mr. Dawson and Christy, Esther and Lanty, were talking, heedless of the Chopin waltz at which Philomena's fingers

were busy. The sweet rhythmic cadences fell unnoticed on their ears, but not so on those of the music-loving Father Macklin. He came in with quick steps from the front room, and taking up the violin, tried to follow her. She played too quickly, however, and the piece was strange to him. After a few abortive attempts, he gave it up, and stood quietly listening, with a rapt look, until she came to the finale.

'Now, Miss Dunne, will we have one try at the "Kreutzer"?'

His pronunciation of the name of that famous composition was somewhat peculiar, but it was the same as the amiable Philomena's, and she recognised it at once, and took out the piece from a pile of well-worn leaves at her side.

'Look at Father Macklin! Doesn't he look happy?' Christy Carew said this,

directing the looks of her group on the musicians.

The violinist's head was bent sideways over his instrument, and his eyes were fixed, with an expression at once watchful and melancholy, on the sheet before him. He seemed dead to everything else.

'Where does he come from?' Sugrue asked of Esther.

'I know,' Miss Carew answered for her. 'St. Giles's, up in the Liberties—I heard him telling another priest in the train the other day. They were school-fellows, or something of that sort, but this other priest made a good answer. He said he had a curacy in Galway; had "a lovely small cottage on the shore of the Atlantic."' She mimicked the Galway brogue, as she said this, so as to make them all laugh. '"Then you'll have a fine view, anyhow," said Father Macklin. "Oh, view is it!" said

his friend, "sorra ha'porth between me and America."'

All laughed still further, save Mr. Dawson, who, on hearing the brogue, had put himself on the *qui vive* for some Irish wit, and pricked up his ears lest he should miss a pun at least.

He turned a blank countenance to Miss O'Neil, but met Lanty's eyes bent on him with such an expression of abandoned impishness, that, fearing an ambush of some sort, he stopped and laughed in a forced, hesitating way, and then walked away at once.

Irish humour was not always intelligible to Mr. Dawson, though he did his best to master all the national peculiarities and idiosyncrasies. He often visited the country and had set himself to examine in a purely scientific spirit the wants of the nation—without success, it need not be

said. For he had neglected to bring to the undertaking one most important and necessary qualification — a sympathetic feeling.

He liked the Irish thoroughly, and despised them about equally—they were congenitally inferior to him and to any or all Englishmen. He was willing to make allowances for them, as he might for the inhabitants of Congo. They could not help themselves, they were Irish: a comprehensive term, explaining and accounting for everything—rain, poverty, piety and all included, even to jokes which he could not understand.

He was no favourite with the young people, for they resented his half-implied patronage, and the son of the house, young O'Neil, with Lanty, rejoiced exceedingly over his discomfiture.

Mr. Dawson walked off and set his back

against the mantelpiece in the other room with a dignified air, as though the matter were beneath his notice.

Could he have looked out of the door on the stairs and lobby, and seen the merriment and mockery of the listeners, who had fled thither to enjoy themselves without hindrance, he would have had some little doubts on the subject. Christy was leaning against the wall, gasping for breath; Lanty had slid to the bottom of the stairs, where, with his friend Nicholas John O'Neil, he was making merry at Mr. Dawson's expense.

'Oh, Esther, I cannot! Wait until I recover.' Esther had come out to try to get the tenants back. 'No, I never would have believed it if any one else had told me. Lanty always declared he could understand nothing beyond a pun. And, do you know, the reason I told him the story

was just to try, for he had been telling me that, though he had been half a dozen times before in Ireland, he never had heard a single witty saying.'

'Come, now, he is not so bad as that. I have heard him tell good stories of his own.'

'His own? Bah! some things he has read in a book and learned off by heart. I am coming now; I feel better—oh!'

But at the threshold of the door Miss Carew had a relapse, and nothing but the fear of disturbing the 'Kreutzer' sonata could bring her back to a proper and decorous bearing.

Sugrue, whose nerves could stand more than his pupils', remained seated by himself at the top of the room. He was glad to have peace to enjoy the really good playing of the priest and Miss Dunne, and he watched, with a sensation of almost

envy, the faces of both as they plied their task; the soft full sweetness of the piano tempered the more *aigre douce* tones of the violin, and the voices in the front room were too remote to mar the effects of even the more piano passages. They were playing for the sake of the music alone, not their chance hearers, and, as is always the case then, it was done more justice to.

'How splendidly Philomena plays,' said Christy to Esther. 'Mr. Sugrue looks quite struck by it. Philomena ought to be proud of herself.'

'I am glad he likes it,' said Esther, 'for I was afraid, from what he said last night, that he despised everything of that sort: he is above it all.'

'I don't think so, in the least; on the contrary, he is wonderfully clever. I feel afraid of him, and yet how nice he is to alk to.'

'Yes; he pays you the compliment of talking sensibly: not the gibberish other people treat you to, as if you were an idiot, and must be coaxed and soothed, as Mr. Dawson does, for example; he has actually one voice for talking to men, and one for us. I do detest it. Here he comes now. Does not Father Macklin play well?' she asked the Englishman, who by this time had reached her.

'H'm—yes,' replied he, with a critical air; 'his bowing is amateurish rather. He ought to hear Joachim play that.'

'How could he hear anything of the kind?' returned she, almost crossly; 'he has no time even for practice. Thank you, Father Macklin. You must not unscrew the violin again. Play us that last thing but one—you know, of De Beriot's—again.'

'You practise a great deal, I suppose?' Mr. Dawson said, patronisingly.

'Practise—eh? Yes, an odd hour or so of an evening,' replied the curate, laying down the violin tenderly as he spoke.

'Dear me! I thought it was impossible to attain any proficiency without much greater labour than that. Paganini—you remember Paganini's celebrated saying: "Twelve hours a day for twenty years."'

'Or "Twenty hours a day for twenty years," eh? I fancy it was that,' returned the priest quietly, but with an amused look. 'Well, well, that would be making a pain of a pleasure indeed. I must be going, I think.'

Here, to Lanty Carew's disgust, for he was meditating the same step, Mr. Dawson went over and seated himself by Esther, to whom he began to make himself agree-

able, talking, as was his wont, down to the level of her understanding, with his face, which was set in an enormous beard, placed as close as possible to hers. Sugrue, from the hearthrug in the front room, was watching her face with an amused expression, all the time listening to the talk beside him, which went on unceasingly, though Father Gleeson was singing 'The Stirrup Cup' at the pitch of his great Limerick baritone.

'I see that your friend O'Gorman Forrall has carried the day at Ballyhannish, Mr. Sugrue,' said Mr. Dowda.

'Yes, he is is at the top of the poll,' returned Sugrue, dryly.

'Dear me! I suppose he isn't thirty yet, and, certainly, that is promotion for so young a man.'

'How can he afford to give up his profession, eh?' asked the canon, in a sneer-

ing tone. 'Expects to make something by his patriotism!'

'He has some private means,' hastily rejoined Sugrue. 'I think, for the rest, he is thoroughly sincere and honest; in fact, I know he is—an utter visionary.' He added the last words in a lower tone, to himself.

'Well, we'll live to see how long it will last, once he gets to the other side of the water. There's something in the air there that changes them all, once they get into it.'

Sugrue made no answer to this. Mr. Dowda began again.

'That Streamstown election took every one by surprise. MacSheehan's success was wonderful.'

'Wonderful indeed, everything considered,' echoed a bystander.

'Any vagabond that will shout "Home

Rule!" loud enough will get their favour before a deserving employer. I will say I never saw a more shameful case.'

Mr. O'Dowda was speaking *à propos* of a recent North-country election. He had all the time his eyes fixed on the canon's face, gauging his opinions, for Mr. O'Dowda intended to try for a seat in the corporation, and the canon's influence in the desiderated ward was not to be despised.

'A-a-h! but MacSheehan is a Catholic,' said the host, 'and Mr. Laurence was a Presbyterian.' As O'Neil said this he compressed his thin, hard mouth and half closed his eyes.

'Ah, no matter! no matter now!' and Mr. O'Dowda turned to Sugrue. 'The man that has a vested interest in the town, and gives such employment, surely he ought to go before a stray bird like that MacSheehan. Why, not three years ago,

I give you my solemn word, he had to borrow the money to go down to Kilfinane to bury his sister; aye, and never paid it since.'

'What was his particular claim on the borough?' asked Sugrue.

'His father was killed by an Orange mob one Twelfth of July. Deuce another do I know of, except cheek unlimited; and, bedad, that same killing has been the making of the son. What will that fellow do for Streamstown, I'd like to know? not but he's good enough for them that sent him up, but I like to see merit rewarded, so I do!'

'Ay, ay!' said the canon, taking an enormous pinch of snuff; 'no doubt Laurence is a worthy man, and liberal too; oh, very! gave a handsome donation to the church there a few years ago—a hundred and fifty, indeed!'

'That was very fair,' said O'Neil. 'I know he was anything but bigoted—rather tolerant, on the contrary.' O'Neil and the canon had not yet dropped the obsolete expressions before explained. 'I don't know why it is so, but Dissenters from that Church are usually less bigoted than the regular Protestants.'

'Because they have a sort of fellow-feeling for your party,' put in Sugrue. 'They are looked down on and have been ill-treated themselves.'

'True!' said the canon, but half-unwillingly, for Dissenters and Protestants are alike outside that true Church in which alone is salvation; 'it may be as you say, Mr. Sugrue.'

'Then again,' continued Sugrue, speaking impulsively, 'Dissenters, in their dealings with Roman Catholics, have not the social ascendency to maintain which the

others have—or fancy they have,' Sugrue added hastily, for he remembered suddenly that his listeners would probably cavil at that assertion. Hugh O'Neil, the descendant of a line of famous chieftains, was hardly likely to allow that any heretic could have social ascendency over him. Besides, as a Protestant himself, Sugrue felt a twinge of compunction for alluding to a subject fraught with such delicacy.

'Ay, true—true,' assented the host, in a constrained tone.

The canon contented himself with looking at Sugrue critically, and not too respectfully—for he knew his circumstances and all about him—and then went back to a previous subject of discourse; to wit, the election of a doctor to one of the city workhouses.

Two medical men of rival religious persuasions had applied for the post, and

of course the question of the day was how to secure it to the Catholic candidate. A third candidate, also a Catholic, had presented himself, and threatened to divide the suffrages of the electoral body. O'Neil was a guardian and voter, and to him the Canon expressed himself in angry tones against the selfish inconsiderateness of the new-comer.

'I want you to see him, Mr. O'Neil, or write to him and represent that we can't allow the Liberal party to be broken up that way. There is a strong body of Orangemen and Freemasons on that Board, and I know this Dr. Simpson is a Mason, and we may be sure that will stand to him. Nothing like it.' The canon was the speaker, from the depths of his arm-chair.

'Yes, canon—yes. Dr. Reilly was the first to apply; Finnerty must withdraw. We have had trouble enough to form that

majority, and we must keep it at all risks. Certainly.'

'Oh, certainly! and, indeed, there is far too little discipline of the kind used. Catholics might be far better off to-day if they would be more unselfish and united, better off all through the country. I say it is ridiculous of a man who knows the state of the Board to attempt to divide the votes. It is hard enough to get Catholic seats at all; and now, when they have them, let people make proper use of the means at their disposal, and not go to defeat their own ends.'

The speech of the canon was largely intended for the benefit of the young people present—to show them how much was to be gained by Catholicity as a profession, and by one united common action against the powers that be. The canon was a most active and zealous partizan, and

not an appointment was given to a Protestant by the Government in any part of Ireland that he did not challenge. He was busy at present with an inquiry into the number of Protestants engaged in the Irish branches of the Civil Service their relative positions and salaries, deducing therefrom grievances to be submitted to, or rather forced upon, Parliament, at the earliest moment possible.

Sugrue had been listening quietly to the conversation; his eyes were now caught suddenly by Miss Carew; he rose and went towards her.

'It seems a century since I met you, Mr. Sugrue,' said Christina, in a friendly voice, 'and I was wanting to ask you several things.'

'Suppose we sit down here,' said Sugrue, turning to an ottoman at the end of the

room, in face of the group of politicians on the hearthrug.

'Yes,' she said graciously, even gladly; 'and now tell me where you have been these ages?'

'I have been busy—very busy, and you know I don't pay visits.'

'You—you *should* have come to see us, notwithstanding.' Christy lowered her voice and drooped her eyes as she said this; and having finished her speech, she sighed. Sugrue was silent, and looked perplexed. She continued: 'I thought you would have—that after all the trouble you had with me, you would not have renounced me utterly.'

The perplexed, nearly startled, look left his face, and was succeeded by a grim one.

'Well,' he said, almost roughly, 'you told me yourself that a young lady's arith-

metical education ended with vulgar fractions; and as we arrived at that consummation simultaneously with the end of the Christmas holidays, what more did you want me to do for you?'

'True, indeed!' sighed Christy. 'Cube-root comes after vulgar fractions, and—and—— Well, I can tell you this much, I read every book you named in that list you gave, and I want you to give me another.'

'Shan't,' returned he with composure; 'you had books enough for any reasonable person for a whole year. Read them over again.'

'Very well, I will,' she said submissively.

She had noticed the canon's eye upon her with an expression of questioning and displeasure, and she determined to give his reverence something to see, so she turned the conversation, and began to chatter and

laugh in a way meant to give that potentate to understand that she had serious intentions.

He was her parish priest, though not her confessor. He was Mrs. Carew's, and had been Christina's also; but she had fancied that some items of her confession were not as new to him as they should have been, and suspecting her step-mother of a kindly desire to save her trouble, forthwith removed her spiritual custom elsewhere. Lanty presently joined his sister.

'Come into the next room, Sugrue. Christina, it is nearly time we were going. What were you saying to the canon? I can't endure him—such a pompous, stuck-up—and do you know, his father was a butcher in William Street. I say, Miss Dunne,' Lanty said hastily, for he found himself close to that young lady, and feared she had heard his remarks, 'is not the

canon to preach next Sunday? What sort of a preacher is he?'

Preaching was not the canon's *forte* by any means, as Lanty well knew; however there are always compensating virtues, and he listened to Philomena's demure answer with a wicked glimmer in his eyes.

'Well, of course, Mr. Carew,' answered Philomena, solemnly, 'he is not like Father Burke. In fact, he is not a—a—great preacher; but then you know, Mr. Carew, he's a famous canon lawyer!' What this meant Philomena had not the faintest conception, but of course its incomprehensibility enhanced its value in her eyes.

'Did you ever hear the Roman saying, Miss Dunne, "The greater the canon the greater the bore"?'

Sugrue laughed, in spite of his efforts to preserve a grave countenance; but Miss Dunne did not understand, and looked

a little shocked as her mystifier walked off.

'It's the canon that has put his hoof on Nicholas John O'Neil's going through Trinity. What good will that other precious C.U. do him, I'd like to know? and what a gang he will have to associate with there. My word, it is cool of his reverence interfering like that. What use will the Catholic University be to him? All stuff—it's losing time. I say,' continued Lanty, 'don't you like old Macklin?' The Reverend Mr. Macklin, be it observed, was about thirty-five years of age.

'Father Macklin—yes.'

'He is the right sort, now; but you never hear of him in the least—and doesn't he play well? I do like him! Gleeson is good fun—tells any amount of stories. This is his last. He said the other day a friend of his was at mass, somewhere away

in the west, and the priest couldn't find anywhere on the altar the list of the souls of the faithful departed. He had to read them, you know, before the Gospel. So, after long rummaging, he turned in perplexity to the acolyte, and, from behind his hand, whispered to him: "Pether, *where* are the sowls of the faithful de parted?" This was loud enough to be heard half-way down the church. "Under the first brass candlestick to the left-hand side of the tabernacle you'll find them, your riverence!" answered Peter, quite as loud.'

'Peter answered a question I should not like to undertake,' observed Sugrue. 'Lanty, I say—Lanty! They are all going downstairs. I'm off. To-morrow evening at seven—mind.'

Sugrue left the room without taking leave of any one, passed down the stairs

unseen, and left the house. He chose to go home by a quiet way along the sea-shore. It was past eleven, and he met not a soul upon the road, which lay white and clear before him. It was high tide, and there was a pure salt savour in the air, which seemed to throb in unison with the smooth round waves below the wall that fenced the road on its seaward side.

The quiet and freshness were enticing. Sugrue stopped suddenly, and laying one hand on the wall, swung himself leisurely into a sitting posture, with his legs hanging over the other side. He took off his hat and let the air play on his face and head. It was pleasant there, in the dark cool air, after the hot, gas-lit room.

It was a dull night sky, starless, but with a clear transparentness, and it was a dull, sullen sea that seemed to swing list-

lessly against the grey barrier of the granite piles.

'Wish I'd my pipe,' he said. 'Catch me going there again—even at your bidding, Miss Esther—or your's, my pupil Christy,' he added more thoughtfully. 'What on earth did she mean by her gracious attentions to me to-night? What a fool I am!' he thought to himself, bitterly.

Suddenly his ear caught the sound of voices in the distance. He put on his hat quickly, for he recognised the tones of one of them at least—Mr. Carew, his employer, and a brother of Judge Armstrong's. Behind them, and walking at a slower pace, came Mrs. Carew and a third gentleman. Sugrue barely waited to assure himself of their identity; he grasped the coping-stone of the wall with one hand, and let himself drop noiselessly on the wet gravel below.

He heard the two bass voices pass dis-

cussing the prospects of war, in easy alternations with excellent cigars. Then, after an interval came the laggards. Sugrue could hear the lady clearly, though she spoke in a low voice, needlessly low, for there was no one, presumably, to hear her.

'Yes, Captain Jocelyn, I adore the sea.'

They were standing still now, and, to Sugrue's consternation, just over his head, and looking out across the water. He held his breath, dreading to be seen; fortunately the dark pebbles and weed-grown wall shadowed him charitably, and he escaped the romantic lady's observation. She continued speaking in an affected tone that Sugrue had heard before, and that called up some humorous reminiscences in his brain.

'I think that sweet bit of Tennyson's quite the gem of all his writings, don't you know?

'"Break, break, break,
On thy cold grey stones, O Sea."

'H'm, h'm, h'm—yes.

'"But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me."

'"Break, break——" It's lovely, isn't it?'

Sugrue bit his nether lip hard.

'Don't care for Tennyson. I like Hugo, like Swinburne better myself. Swinburne is the only one for the sea. Don't you know his——'

But here the voices were lost. They turned from the contemplation of the sea, and followed the couple in their van, who had now got considerably in advance.

Sugrue waited a few minutes to let them get well out of hearing, then set about regaining the road. It was by no means so easy as to get down, and in the darkness he

could find no crevices for his feet among the huge slabs covered with green slippery moss. At last he scrambled up and over the wall into the road. He turned and looked after the retreating couple. As they passed by a lamp the light fell on them, and he had a good view of both. Mrs. Carew's white bonnet was drooped pensively to one side, and so was the head of the gentleman who preferred Swinburne to Tennyson.

'Whew!' whistled Sugrue. 'It's the man we met that night on the pier—an aide-de-camp, English, or half-English—he doesn't possess an "r" anyhow; and I remember his asking who Miss O'Neil was. Bravo, Madam Carew!' Then he smiled grimly at some ridiculous notion; however, in a few minutes he bethought himself of the time of night it now was, and turning his face homewards, reached the

thatched cottage in Glasthule in something less than five minutes.

When he got to his room he took off his coat and hung it up: then he advanced to the little shelf that held his books to take the 'Digest of the Common Law;' but some whim took him to light his pipe instead, and lean on his elbows and stare out of the little window into the garden, where he could see nothing but the ghostly outlines of the apple-trees and some white linen garments bleaching on the hedges. His thoughts reverted, in spite of himself, to the scene of the evening.

Christy's overtures were at once a sweet and bitter thought. Mrs. Carew's image rose before his eyes.

'Empty, worldly-minded fool!' he called her. 'Could any girl of eighteen have a worse example—and what is it to me?' He asked himself the question aloud.

A few minutes later, however, saw the cutty pipe extinguished, the candle lighted, and Sugrue's head bowed over the pages of the 'Digest;' while the grey moths scorched themselves in the flame unnoticed, and daddy-longlegs and spinners pursued their investigations as undisturbed as if the little room were untenanted save by themselves.

CHAPTER IV.

'The place that does contain
My books, the best companions, is to me
A glorious court.'

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

AUGUST wore on to the end, dreeing St. Swithin's weird, to the disgust above all others of holiday-makers by the sea. Rain fell daily, whether in drenching steady torrents, thunderous but evanescent showers, or dull grey sea mists, above which a red sun sailed, as if in high mockery of the distress below. Lodged corn half-ripened, and soaked potatoes, their haulms rotting

and infecting the air, implored the heavens in vain.

With September came a change, and hot dry days began to repair the mischief as speedily as they could. On one of these, in the full glare of mid-day, Christy Carew ran headlong into the O'Neils' house.

'Oh, you are ready! Did I keep you waiting?" she called, on meeting Esther in the hall.

'No; come and get in. There is the phaeton, now, and Philomena will be down directly. She has forgotten something—that's her way, you know.'

So speaking, Esther led the way down the steps to where a droll little pony-phaeton was in waiting, drawn by a thick-set hog-maned pony.

'Get in there, Chris, and tuck in that shawl well,' continued Esther; 'it has

such a trick of getting in the mud at that side.'

Miss Carew stooped obediently, and fastened in the drooping corner of the shawl; as she did so, she said, in a low voice that had a slightly discontented ring in it:

'I say, is Philomena coming?'

'Yes,' replied Esther; 'I wouldn't like to leave her behind: it wouldn't be kind—eh?' she asked, with a sort of deprecating look into her companion's face.

Esther felt doubtful if she were not doing Christy, whom she knew to be impatient of Miss Dunne's brogue and insipidity, an injustice, while indulging her own inclination to be kind to her guest.

Christy, who was keen of discernment, felt shamed to the quick, and holding out her hand to Philomena, who appeared at this juncture, greeted her so pleasantly and

cordially as to put the timid musician into the best possible humour.

They were setting out on a drive to visit an old friend of Esther's, a priest who lived high up on the mountain-side.

Philomena hoisted her small person into the back seat, in which she tried hard to look comfortable, but as to whose security she felt horrible internal misgivings.

'Now, Paddy, will you please to go on?' said Esther to her steed, giving him a tap with the whip and a gentle monition with the reins.

Paddy only shook his head. His mistress repeated the invitation, which this time he acknowledged by hoisting his hind feet about four inches off the ground. This meant rebellion.

'Give him a good one,' suggested Christy; 'it's a case-hardened sinner.'

Philomena uttered a little faint scream,

on hearing which the others laughed unfeelingly.

The man who had brought round the vehicle was lounging at the corner, and came grinning to their aid.

'I knewn this would be the way, miss. Will I turn him, and run him along a bit for ye?'

Without more ado, he seized the recalcitrant Paddy, swung him round by the head, and ran along, pulling the pony with him, at a good trot for some dozen or so yards.

'G'lang, ye unmannerly thief!' he said, releasing his hold and bestowing a parting cuff on the creature's ribs. 'Such manners to show ladies! I'm ashamed ov ye.'

Paddy seemed to take the admonition to heart, for he kept up the pace till they were well clear of the town and up on the

high open road that conducted to their destination.

'We'll drive straight to Father Considine. I have not been to see him this age. After that we we'll come back by the mountain road—if the weather and Paddy are willing, that is.'

Esther finished the sentence with a doubting glance at the fat, black pony, who was now trotting along in an easy-going, steady way that boded pleasantly enough for the expedition.

'Well,' said Christy, 'I would never let an animal master me like that. I would have it out with him first. Do give him a touch with the whip, Essie; if you don't, we shall never pass that donkey-cart.'

'No, no, not yet! Philomena,' said Esther, turning round her head, 'are you comfortable there? You don't look it.'

Philomena protested that she was perfectly happy on her perch, which, in her heart, could she have chosen, she would gladly have exchanged for her music-stool at the Broadwood grand piano; and she leaned back and ruminated silently, or seemed to do so. In reality, no definite thought of any kind passed through the chambers of her mind; she heard in a half-dream the sighing of the wind as it roamed in the beech-trees overhead, and the dull green of the September hedges and fields fell half-unheeded on her eyes, as she drove past them.

Esther went on contentedly for a while. Paddy had hardly settled down to his work yet, and required a little care at her hands, and Christy's impatient criticism made her owner vigilant for her own and the pony's reputation.

'I intend to try and get Father Consi-

dine to come down and dine with us if I can; but it's almost impossible to get him out. He is always miserable away from his books. Papa heard of him at the Sale Rooms, yesterday, buying a lot of rare old books. He'll starve for a month now, most likely, to make up for that outlay.'

'Yes. Mr. Sugrue told us that he was so well known as a buyer and judge of books, that anything he was heard to bid for was run up to an immense price by the people present; and when poor Father Considine found that out, he arranged with the auctioneer that he was to be allowed to stand near him and pull the leg of his trousers, instead of bidding out loud. I don't know him, except by sight. He looks such a delicate, fragile old creature.'

'Yes, so he is. I don't think he eats as

he ought. He has spent heaps of money —a whole fortune—on books; and now, though he has only a small income left, it goes in the same way. By-the-bye, Christy, as you have not been to his house before, I may as well tell you—on no account ask, or, if he offers it, accept, the loan of a book from him; don't even touch one with your fingers. He'll offer to show them to you as soon as ever we get in, for he thinks there is nothing like them in the world; but don't on any account even pretend you would like to take hold of one, and as for wanting to borrow one, I believe you would kill him!'

'Don't be afraid on my account,' returned Christy dryly. 'Tell me, what sort of books are they?'

'Sort!' echoed Esther, 'how should I know? Latin, Greek, theology, and old black-letter—whatever that is. You will

hear all about them, never fear. Chick! Paddy.'

They were driving now through a well-wooded avenue, the elms and beech-trees leaned across the walls and shook their leafy branches, as if to caress each other, over the road. The beech-masts were thick on the tall boughs, and gave them a curious bronzed look. The elms showed pale green tips to their branches, and for all the warmth and sunlight there was a harshness in the rustle of the leaves that plainly proclaimed it autumn. Over the high garden walls came a smell of ripe fruit, and chestnut trees were hung with little dark green balls.

'This gateway up here, at the corner, leads up to the Molyneux' house. Look in as you pass; the lodge is so prettily built.'

They all turned their heads to look in at

the handsome gothic gateway, and Paddy, left to his own vagrant will, made a move to turn round. He succeeded so far as to place himself and the pony-carriage right across the road. Esther, alarmed, for there was a sound of horses fast advancing, pulled with all her might at the reins. She was barely in time to escape collision with a dog-cart drawn by a couple of horses harnessed tandemwise; as it was, the wheels locked, and the basket phaeton received a violent jar.

Philomena was too alarmed even to scream, Esther too busy with her steed, who showed much discontent at the ill-success of his ruse. Christy, who was frightened, was about to jump out.

'Sit still, pray!' cried a voice she knew. 'There is no danger. Get down, Stephen,' continued the driver of the dog-cart; 'go to the pony's head.'

'Oh, Mr. Jocelyn!' Christy recognised him now. 'You were near doing damage. Esther, don't you remember Mr. Jocelyn?'

Esther looked up; her face was the least bit flushed with the exertion and the fright too, her lips were trembling and the delicately-formed nostrils quivering, but her eyes met Mr. Jocelyn's with a bright smile in them.

They were in a shady spot beneath the beeches, but the wind shook the branches slightly at that moment, and a flickering chequered sunbeam ran across her face upturned to him, lighting up her gold-tinged hair and that delicately-tinted skin that was the chief claim to beauty of her face.

'How do you do?' she said, a little hesitatingly. 'It was my fault. I beg your pardon.'

The driver of the tandem had swung himself down from his perch, and was on

the ground now, leaving the reins to a gentleman who was seated beside him. He came closer, and leaned on the side of the phaeton. His groom left Paddy's head and went to that of the leader.

'Miss Carew!' said the young officer; 'I never dreamed it was you.' Though he spoke to her, his eyes every now and then took quick fleeting glances at her companion. She was leaning a little forward, and he could see her at his ease. 'Is that your pony, Miss O'Neil? What a jolly little beggar it is! Do you often drive round these roads? I am on my way to Powerscourt, to the garden-party at Lord Paulet's. You are not going?'

She looked, rather than said, 'No.' Every moment she felt growing shyer and more confused.

'To-morrow night I'm off to Scotland, to shoot for a month in Inverness. I'll not

be back till Christmas; no, Miss Carew, perhaps not then either, but I'm safe to be here for the season. We shall meet again then, I trust.'

'Under happier auspices, I hope,' said Christy.

'I hope so, Miss O'Neil. Good-bye.'

He shook hands with the two girls. Esther held out hers, fairly lost in a huge wash-leather driving-glove that was ever so much too big for it.

'Good-bye,' she said, blushing a little, for she was obliged to look at him, as he took the hand in his.

She dropped her eyes directly, and whether in taking back her hand she accidentally touched the reins, or Paddy the incorrigible did it of his own accord and malice prepense, but the phaeton started off, scarcely leaving him time to step back out of the way.

She turned her head and nodded with a smile, as much as to say, 'I can't help this.' Then they turned up another road, and the dog-cart was lost to view. Christy took the whip out of its place.

'I am going to punish this animal for bringing us into such a scrape,' she said. 'Just let me have the reins, and see if I don't reduce him to order.'

'No! no! no!—neither one nor the other. I won't have him whipped, Chris. Here we are now.'

They had turned a corner, and the village of Newtown Mountkelly lay before them: a village the exact type of its class all over the country, and consisting of a filthy muddy street, flanked on either side by cottages, some of which were slated, but in main part thatched; all with that weather-beaten, dilapidated look of poverty and thriftlessness, two qualities

the fullest expression of which is to be found in Irish rural scenes.

A few pigs roamed from one gutter to the other. The hens and children had established themselves on the thresholds, where they seemed to enjoy equal rights; the women squatted about in the sun, or projected their tangled heads from the doors to view the phaeton and its occupants.

'We go round that corner by the great chestnut-tree; his house is a little further along the road,' Esther said, giving the animal a gentle poke.

In a few minutes they found themselves before a rusty iron gate. This gave entrance to a flagged grass-grown path, leading up to an old, two-storied, white house, with, for its size, far too many windows. Eight of these looked out on the road, the view of which was obscured

by the height of a couple of gloomy yew-trees, which had overgrown the dimensions of the neglected garden and stretched their sombre boughs to the very panes. Only one window had curtains, but screens of ragged white stuff were fastened to the lower sashes of the rest. A great thick jessamine-tree had grown over one-half of the house wall, which was very low, and the gloomy front was full of the sweet fleeting perfume. The flowers had grown to weeds, the fuchsias were trees taller than Esther, and some yellow tea-roses hung high out of reach on a ruinous side-wall. Everything else was hidden by tall groundsel and docks. The place had a chilly, gloomy look, as if the winter that was fast advancing had an outpost securely planted here, and the sunless north aspect of the house added to this.

'Now, Philomena,' said Esther, 'get

down and sit in my place, and don't let go the reins, else Paddy will run off home, and perhaps smash everything. We shan't be long.'

She and Christy went up to the hall-door and knocked with the rusty old ring depending from a comic-looking brass lion's mouth that served for that purpose.

After a delay, there appeared an elderly woman, respectable as to dress, and with a countenance expressing at once kindness and severity, she ushered them across a narrow unfurnished passage into a large bare room, in which there were two chairs and a common deal table. Round the room by the wall lay deal packing-cases of great solidity; one or two were open, showing the leather covers of the books, which seemed their only contents. The boards were bare, and the solitary back window, without curtain or blind,

gave an open outlook into a wilderness of a garden, where the privet of the hedges had grown up unchecked and the grass had long ago invaded and made its own of the alleys, whose whereabouts was to be guessed only from the landmarks afforded by the straggling box-edges. The fruit-trees were unpruned and untended, and the ripe apples lay thick on the ground as they had fallen from the boughs. A bed of mignonette had outgrown its boundaries and sprawled across the neglected pathway, shaking its now ripe seed-vessels among the grass, and an old disused pump raised its spectral-looking frame from a circle of tall Michaelmas daisies and audacious dandelions.

'Oh, my saints!' ejaculated Christy, looking out the window, after a discursive range of the room; 'will you look at the state of his garden?'

Esther obeyed this invitation addressed, though indirectly, to her, and sighed as she beheld the waste and ruin there set forth. She was about to speak, but some indescribable sound without fell with a warning on their ears, and made both the girls turn round. The door opened with a rusty uneven creak, and the master of the house stood before them.

A little pale old man, dressed in a rusty stained cassock, half the buttons of which were missing, and which was fastened awry, his scanty silvery hair falling over the spotless white rabbi, entered with a shuffling, unequal walk. When inside the door, he stood for a moment peering nervously with worn blue eyes, which the cross light from the dark north window to the sunny south one made to blink pitifully. He raised one hand to his brow, and shaded thus recognised Esther, who,

smiling at his embarrassment, stood with hand outstretched waiting half-mischievously for his recognition.

'Esther, dear creature, and how are you?' cried the old priest, in a voice that was at once cordial towards her and dissatisfied with himself. He took her hand, and holding it, turned to look at Christy, who stood a little behind. 'And this is Elizabeth—n-no—no.'

'No, father. This is Christina Carew. I told you about her before.'

Father Considine dropped Esther's hand, and bowed with a quaint old-world courtesy of manner, so graceful and perfectly foreign, that Christy, as she returned the salutation, somehow felt the whole atmosphere of the place changed. She forgot the bare empty room, the incongruousness of everything, the ruined garden, and the dusty worn garb of the old priest, all which had

seemed to her a few minutes before provocative merely of contempt and mirth. Worn and pale as the old man looked, there was a quiet dignity and individuality about his person that could not fail to impress even the lightest-minded observer.

'I am glad to see you—very,' he said graciously. 'And now, tell me'—he was looking towards Esther now—'how is my good friend, my old friend, your father, child? Come into my room; there are at least three chairs there, Miss Carew, and you must be tired after so long a walk.'

He turned and led the way to another apartment across the hall. The girls tripped after him, and found themselves this time in a furnished room; that is, heavy-laden bookcases, all fitted with glass doors and some with curtains, ran all round the room, and there was a table in the centre, but loaded also with dusty

volumes of all kinds. An old easy-chair, with a rich-coloured embroidered cushion that Esther had worked for him, was set near the fire, and beside it, on a reading-easel, a huge volume bound in curious antique fashion, with clasps of chased brass work, lay open, just as its owner had left it when summoned away. Over the chimney-piece was a large ivory crucifix beautifully carved, and of a strange quaint device, but sadly yellowed by time, and piled below it were volumes of books in weather-worn calf, tough sheepskin, stamped gilt leather, or the flimsy yellow paper covers that the French think good enough for their literary productions. An Agnus Dei, the wax of which was yellow and crumbly, in a gilt frame, hung to the foot of the crucifix, and below it a great bunch of keys. At the back of the door was another soutane,

something newer looking, and the black frock-coat and rusty hat of large size that the old priest wore whenever he took his rare excursions abroad.

'Don't take that chair, dear child!' cried the master of the house, hastily, seeing that Esther was about to pull a chair out of a corner; 'that is an invalid; it has only three serviceable legs. Canon Caffery was too much for its constitution that day he called to see me after he came back from Rome. Dear! dear! I should be sorry if you were to get a fall. Come near the fire, my children. Ah, you feel warm, eh? I am never warm—never.'

He stood now with his back to the grate, in which a red spark glowed among a mass of dull grey cinders, and his contracted white cheeks looked indeed as if no sun nor fire could warm them into even a semblance of life.

'I came to ask you to dine with us any day you can name, father. It is so long since you were down in our quarter of the world. Come early some day, and we'll drive you home.'

'Thanks, dear. I never dine out. No, child, no. I'm too old for gaiety and racketing, and—and——'

He did not finish the sentence, but glanced round the room at the books.

'I see what it is,' said Esther, reprovingly; 'you won't leave your books.'

He sighed and smiled, then shook his head, as if in vain endeavour to repel the accusation, and, getting up, began to fumble with the bunch of keys.

Christy, who found the air of the room, compounded as it was of the smell of old leather and mouldering furniture, intolerably close, had perched herself on the old-fashioned deep window-sill, and with her

critical faculties, which had been suspended for the moment by the unexpected circumstances of her encounter with her host, now fully awakened, was looking at him curiously.

The light, which she, sitting sideways, did not in the least obscure, fell in a clear stream on the little old priest, and his quaint pale face and bald head with its straggling silver locks, seemed as if it shed a nimbus of pale gold light all round. The skin was absolutely colourless and transparent, and waxen of hue; the retreating broad forehead and long-shaped head, which was bent forward always, as if from constant poring over his beloved volumes, made her think of some picture she remembered to have seen of one of the old Fathers of the Church—Aquinas, perhaps or Augustine, only this face was too benign and sweet for that fierce doctor and lawgiver.

She noticed the partly embarrassed manner, for Esther's tone had, unconsciously to herself, touched a tender spot. Others beside her had reproached his, to them, weakness; and with a feeling curiously compounded of patronage and admiration and pity, she jumped up quickly, and came forward into the room.

'Father Considine, will you show me some of your books? Esther has told me that you have a wonderful collection.'

Father Considine started.

'Aha!' a look of animation brightening up his face, 'and you read then, eh? You like books? You shall see them—you *shall* see them!'

There was an exultation in the tones that nearly upset Christy's gravity, a perilous quantity seldom present, and then needing watchful care; but on a look from Esther she recovered her equanimity.

He moved quickly to the bookcase, and, unlocking the door, pushed back the sliding front and displayed a row of dingy ancient-looking covers. Then he cast a sidelong look at his new friend, who had, in her excess of flattering interest, followed him rather closely, and wheeling round suddenly he crossed his arms on his chest, and with his back to the open case, stood facing her. Esther smiled, but Christy did not understand, and stood looking at him wonderingly.

'What particular book do you wish to see?' asked he, in a sharp, catechising voice.

Christy, doubly bewildered, did not know what to answer, and sought her friend's eye for counsel. Esther came to the rescue:

'Do you remember that wonderful book on the Immaculate Conception that

you showed me the last day I was here ?'

'Oh yes! To be sure—to be sure, my dear child! Come over here, near me, and you shall see it—only—don't put your hand on anything, you know. It might disarrange them, I mean—and I have them placed in particular positions. Ah, my child,' he continued, turning to Esther, 'you don't know the value of these books, and the people I have coming to see them. Ah!' he sighed, 'it's a great charge—a great charge to me. I never lend a book,' he resumed to Christy, in a severe, almost threatening tone; 'never. I did once—' An eloquent pause and shake of the head gave the visitors to understand that the experiment alluded to had not been satisfactory. 'If you wish to read any of them you may come here, and do so while I am here. Those are the conditions—under no others.

Now, my children.' With these three last words he lapsed into his former affectionate friendly tone.

He had turned round again to the shelves, and was running his fingers with a half-caressing movement over the uneven piles with which they were laden. It was interesting to see how he handled the books. The long, tapering yellow fingers grasped them with a dexterous practised touch, just as familiarly and easily as a skilled workman manipulating his tools; stroking down the ancient dun-coloured covers with keen affection, and smoothing the rugosities that had grown on the dingy backs, just like the bosses and wrinkles on an old tree that has weathered the storms and hard usage of hundreds of years.

A side touch of his foot brought into position a little step-ladder, up which he went, and displacing three or four dusty tomes,

which formed a rampart of protection and concealment for it, he unearthed from the recess so made a tiny volume, moth-eaten and crumbling, and with that indescribable patent of antiquity and venerableness that centuries of age alone can give.

Holding it reverently in both hands, he turned to the visitors, who, far more interested in its owner, were looking intently at him.

'There now. A treatise on the Immaculate Conception; look at the date—fourteen hundred and eighty-six — three hundred and eighty odd years ago. Yet the Holy Pontiff is accused of promulgating a novelty in the Great Dogma! Now, doesn't that confound them? Would you like to take it in your hands and glance through it?'

Christy, to whom this generous offer, a real burst of enthusiastic open-heartedness,

was made, had recovered her self-possession, and with it her tact.

'No, thank you, Father Considine,' she said graciously. 'It is too valuable to be handled that way.'

It may be doubted whether this delicate consideration did not arise rather out of her regard for a pair of nice primrose gloves than for the ancient treatise; but Father Considine was enchanted with it. He hastily mounted the steps again, restored the cherished treasure to its nook and sanctuary at once, and pushing the sliding-doors back to their place, proceeded to open another receptacle.

'There's a Caxton Bible—look at that binding, child; clamps of iron—ah! black-letter and a treasure! I have two hundred and fifty Douai Bibles alone—think of that!—from the first edition to the last.'

Christy thought to herself, 'What an utterly useless lot!' but she contented herself with opening her eyes wide, and arching her brows as if lost in wonder and admiration. Suddenly something occurred to her memory; she had heard some friend of the bibliophilist enumerate, amongst others of his treasures, certain rare specimens of some famous Elzevir editions. So she suddenly looked up and inquired with a saucy, sparrow-like air:

'Have you any Elzevirs?' Christy had not the slightest idea of what the word meant.

Father Considine started slightly, and raised his eyes from the pages of an illuminated missal, which he was supporting reverently on one arm, to her face with an odd look of mingled amazement and suspicion.

'I have,' he replied curtly. 'Several.'

'What are they?' Christy made haste to ask this question, which she intended literally, lest he should suppose her to know anything about them, and so expose her ignorance.

'Some of the classics,' replied he, mistaking her drift. 'I have a beautiful Æneid and a Theocritus, but they are upstairs locked up; however, my dear, as you are a friend of my dear Esther's, and she is answerable for you'—he really doubted that she was an emissary sent by the enemy under false pretences—'I will show them to you, for they are treasures; you will be charmed with them. The Theocritus is much later than the Virgil—much. You will recognise that at once on seeing the type.'

'Wouldn't the young ladies like something after their walk, sir?' The housekeeper had opened the door at this

juncture, and, to Christy's relief, opportunely proposed this diversion.

'Eh, children! eh!' said the old priest, looking from one to the other. 'See, run out there, and Mary will look after you—that's best, eh!'

The invitation was comical, but hospitable; and Esther, who knew the ways of the house and its master, signed to Christy to follow her, and went after the housekeeper into the kitchen.

'I have nothing but bread and jam to give ye, miss, but I'm sure ye'll excuse it; and if ye'd like it, step down there and see if there's a plum left on the wall. I saw a few the last time I was in it, but, deary me! them wasps, they ruin anything's any good.'

'Let us go into the garden,' said Christy, whose quick eye had soon exhausted the details of the meagre little kitchen; 'that

room was so warm. You are sure we may?' she added, turning to the housekeeper.

'Oh yes; to be sure, miss,' was the hearty reply.

Esther lingered behind for a few minutes with the housekeeper.

'He looks very poorly to-day, Mary,' she said.

'Wisha, miss! what else could it be? There's more of them ould—God forgive me, I was near sayin' again them—books came home last night. And sure you know, he'll pay for them, no matter what way it goes. Ah, 'tis a sin—so it is, and there's the house so stuffed with them I can't turn myself round in it. You'll believe me, Miss Esther, look at the dinner I have for him this day.'

Mary, whose countenance had taken an anxious, overcast expression, opened the

oven-door and showed the young lady a plate on which were three potatoes and a herring, which were keeping warm until her master should be at liberty to dispose of them.

'Really, it is too bad!' cried Esther. 'Could—could—' she hesitated about saying the words, but Mary understood her.

'No, no, miss; not for the world. He'd go wild, and he'd be sure to know. He's none so simple. Not but what I thank you kindly all the same.'

'Well, I shall go down the garden,' said Esther, disappointed and troubled for her old friend's sake.

She accordingly set off after Christy, whom she found seated on a broken bench under a tree, fanning her hot face with her hat, which she had taken off for the purpose.

'Isn't it a wilderness?' said Christy, in a low tone. 'I can't see a flower anywhere, except those roses, and they fall to bits if one touches them. Look at everything—is it not like the house?'

Even the very garden seemed to have caught the close dreary air of the house. The mouldering, neglected look of the old priest's chamber seemed to be reflected with a curious harmony in the gnarled twisted trees and moss-grown walls, with their tall beard of dead wall-flowers and stone-crop in blossom, and though the heather-scented air of the mountain had full ingress to the place, Christy felt oppressed and languid.

'Oh dear!' sighed Esther, 'I am sorry; he is killing himself. Christy!' she said, suddenly, 'how well you have got on with him! Fancy him letting you come up to read his books!'

'Fancy me doing it!' replied Christy, with an amused laugh.

She had risen from her seat, and had pulled down a branch heavy-laden with ripe red and yellow fruit, and was smelling it.

'Take them,' she said, tossing a handful in Esther's lap. 'Oh! here he comes, though,' and she let go the branch so suddenly that in swinging back a quantity of the ripest apples tumbled off and came down on the hard ground with a thud that bruised them.

The old priest came walking with a feeble step, as if he felt all the weight of his own feet, down the grass-grown alley, shading his eyes from the sun with one hand and with the other holding up the folds of his soutane.

Esther noted his gait, and, sighing,

thought to herself that he got feebler every time she saw him.

'He looks as quaint as if he had stepped down out of some old picture. I have often wondered where painters get those remarkable countenances. I wish we were gone, Esther, really. I'll go to Philomena; I feel in awe of him.'

'You do, do you? that must be a novel sensation to you. Were I you I'd remain here and enjoy it, Christy.'

Esther spoke laughingly. She was amused at the idea of Christy being put out of countenance by any one.

'We have no flowers, I fear, children. I saw roses, somewhere.' He peered round searchingly among the trunks of the apple-trees, where, in truth, was nothing but a rank growth of docks and dandelions with down-laden heads. 'Somewhere, I know. You will find them, Esther; and

do you care for—for apples,'—he had been reminded of their existence by stepping on them—'gather them, and take as many as you like.'

Ere they had time to obey, the housekeeper appeared to tell them their repast was ready. Philomena was fetched in, Paddy's head being held in her absence by a boy who chanced to be passing, and they all returned to the room they had left, where the housekeeper had served lunch—a plate with some slices of very stale bread, and a jar of black currant jam; a yellow pitcher of milk; two blown-glass tumblers, and one teacup, which Esther took, as being the most at home of the trio. Philomena said not a word, and ate bread and jam as she was desired. Father Considine was occupied by but one thought, namely, that the children might not wish to see any more books, there being a pros-

pect of an accompanying desire to handle the volumes, for which he dreaded contact with currant preserve.

Lunch was soon over. Christy ate little or nothing. She fancied the bread and jam had a bookish taste. They rose to go.

'You will come back and see the Elzevirs?' he said to Christy, in a tone at once ceremonious and severe. 'It is not every day that my collection is visited by one who shows such discrimination and knowledge as you have done. I compliment you, Esther, on your friend.'

Esther, sweet simple soul, took it all for granted, and looked at Christy with wondering and admiring eyes, on meeting which that young lady coloured up to the hair. 'Yes, my dear young friend,' continued the old priest, taking Christy's hand in both his own, 'I assure you it is my

experience, books are the most precious gifts God has given us. Riches, friends, health, I value as nothing compared to these silent trusted allies. Who can be lonely with all these to speak to him? and their speech is not the mere babble of the day—fleeting and meaningless as the wind, but the voices of wise men, centuries dead and gone, whose messages these volumes hold as precious treasure for those who choose to converse with them.' He stopped now, a flush lighting up his pale cheeks, and a strange gleam sparkling in his eyes.

Christy had drooped her head with a guilty sensation of mingled compunction and shame, and blushed as the old man was speaking. She took courage when he paused for breath, and looked up into his face as she made answer hurriedly, stumbling over the words.

'I really know nothing, Father Considine. I know nothing of these books. I assure you I don't read—not——'

'But you will,' he insisted—'you will. I will lend you books—come back another day, and you shall have a couple to take home.'

'But I couldn't, indeed,' she burst out, not knowing whether to laugh or cry.

'Why not?'

'Ah! I don't know Latin. You would give me Latin books.' She drew her hands away as she said this, as if she expected a reproof and defied it.

'Would I be rude, dear child?' said he, mournfully.

'Father Considine,' said Esther, who thought it high time to interfere, 'we must go. I shall bring Miss Carew back to see you another day.'

Father Considine made no reply. The gam-

porary flash of excitement had died away, and he only looked at her blankly, as if her words had not reached his ears. They took leave of him at the door of his study, and before they seated themselves in the phaeton he had forgotten their existence in the perusal of the book from which they had disturbed him.

Christina drew a long breath of relief as the pony-carriage turned the corner, and they left the dismal old presbytery behind them.

'Catch me going back there!' she said. 'Ah, never! But I'm sorry for him, too, nice gentle old creature that he is. Is it not a pity he should be so poor?'

'Yes; it is indeed,' sighed Esther, who thought of the dinner she had seen in the oven.

Mr. Sugrue ought to go to see him,' said Christy, who was fumbling in her pockets. 'They would agree as to the delights of

reading. Have an apple, Philomena? Take two; I've stuffed every pocket I've got.'

'Oh, greedy!' said Esther; nevertheless when Philomena had been helped, she also took two.

Paddy was climbing a steep piece of the road, and Esther let the reins fall on his neck, as they munched the hard red apples together. After a while they reached the upper road, which ran along by the foot of the hill.

There were none of the high stone walls which disfigure every one of the otherwise beautiful avenues of the County Dublin, and maliciously shut out the sea and mountain view. On one side rose the high pine-wood, blue-grey in the mellow September sunlight. The woods of Mount Merrion had a tawny ripe colour, like wheat too long left on foot, and the dykes beside them held a good store of blackberries in all

the transition hues, from pale-green and pink, up to scarlet and drop-ripe purple.

They stopped at another cross-road, where the highway divided, one road leading down-hill, the other going on to the slope of the Featherbed mountain.

'There,' said Esther, pulling up the pony, 'is our way home. We can go on straight for another mile, and there is a road there that will take us straight into Kingstown. Which will you choose?'

'Stand still one minute!' pleaded Christy. 'Is not the view divine? Look down at the harbour.'

The two grey piers, stretched out into the sun-bathed water, looked no larger than a man's arms. On the other side of Howth, Lambay showed its grey rocks and pale green expanse, and, farther north still, the hills of Mourne could be distinguished in pale shadowy outline. A steamer was

creeping round Howth lighthouse, leaving a long black mist-wreath hanging over the water behind it. Another was coming down the river, the shadow of the black hull being thrown across the Pigeon-house Wall, and plainly visible on the still surface of the water without.

Red-sailed trawlers tacked about, trying to reach their fishing-grounds, their dark shadows cast in clear relief on the blue opalescent waters. Killiney and Ballybrack looked dwarfed and small, and the uneven chequer-work that stretched to Shankhill and linked the over-topping Three Rock with the Sugar Loaves and Brayhead, showed every colour, from the pale green of the clover-strewn after-grass, to the golden yellow of the bearded barley or the tawny brown of ripe wheat. Looking westward, the sun was beginning to descend, and the city lay bathed in its

still, warm light. The glass roofs of Rathmines Church and the Fourcourts looked like hot discs of mother-of-pearl, and glistened fitfully out of the city vapours. The autumn hues of the trees at Donnybrook and the lines of red brick buildings seemed to blend together into an indistinct warm mass, and, beyond them, the white needle-like monument of O'Connell, in Glasnevin, and the grey-brown obelisk in the Park, reared their heads as landmarks above the heavy green of the elms.

'Splendid, is it not?' murmured Christy at last, with a deep sigh.

Her lazy heavy-lidded eyes were wide open now, fixed with a look that was full of a sad repining on the far woods of the Clontarf shore. She was busy with other thoughts besides those suggested by that ripe autumn landscape. Esther did not answer, and for a few seconds there was a

perfect and unbroken silence among them all. At last from behind came a sound as if of a sigh of peculiar intensity. Esther turned round quickly, to find Philomena's mouth wide open in a huge yawn.

'Oh!' she cried, pretending to be shocked.

Then she gently signified to the pony their wish to proceed homewards; he turned his head as if to take the near cross road by Goatstown homewards, but at that moment a magpie flapped out with a screech from the pines to their right hand and crossed the road.

'Oh!' cried Philomena, 'a magpie; don't let me see it, please. Something will happen, if we go that road.'

She put up her hands before her face.

Miss Carew laughed at her, but Esther drove on straight.

'That's the upper Stillorgan Road,' she

said; 'and there is the corner where we turned to drive up to Newtown Kelly.'

Then she was silent, and her eyes turned with a wistful look to the gold-brown mass of the beeches lying now far beneath them.

Philomena was nearly asleep, and Christy was busy, with her own thoughts. So neither of them made any answer to her remark. Darley's pine-wood was soon reached, and the Ballyedmond-duff Road, with its tall rank hedges where the brambles grew unchecked, tangling the pine trees and shrubs in their thorny thickets. Clematis and white honeysuckle had straggled away from a cabin wall and climbed perversely up a hawthorn-tree, where the sweet white clusters shone with a star-like radiance high up in the dusty green.

Goatstown lay behind, and far below,

near the gleaming pool of the great Vartry reservoir, could be seen the queer fantastic villas of Foock, that wind-blown, rain-washed district with houses in imitation of Swiss châlets, some inhabited, others half-built and deserted, all naked and desolate-looking, standing in fields where yellow rag-weed and thistles struggled with furze and bramble for the mastery.

Downhill all the way till the trees of Monkstown, with the turrets of the church showing among them, came in view. A steep decline made it needful for Esther to check her pony's career, which, now that he realised that they were near home, became too impetuous for safety. A sudden click attracted her attention.

'There!' she cried, 'he has cast a shoe. There it is over there; how lucky that we are close to home.'

'Very, indeed,' said Christina, getting down to pick it up. 'I'll walk the rest of the way, for it is only a mile, and you had better take him home quietly.'

Dissuasion was vain, than ere long the phaeton was out of sight, and Christina left alone on the dusty road.

'Straight along to the top of the West Pier Road,' she muttered to herself, 'that can't be far; about a mile in all, I dare say.'

She tried the middle of the road but the dust, for the ruts left after the recent rains had all crumbled into powder, drove her to the footway, which in its turn was made disagreeable by a covering of rough gravel.

After five minutes' walking she became aware of a man's figure, that had suddenly made its appearance from a side-path in the fields. A look was enough. It was

Sugrue. He saw her at once, and came striding up.

'How do you do? and what brings you here by yourself?'

Christy briefly related the accident.

'I thought it better to get out, the little beast was tired; and now,' she added, 'I am glad I did so.'

'Are you?' he said.

The tone was troubled, and reminded her of the evening at the O'Neils' when she spoke to him.

They turned now together in the direction of home. He walked along, his eyes bent, as if moodily, on the ground. It was for her to speak.

'Yes,' she repeated; 'I wanted to speak to you, you know I do, this long time. What do you mean by living like an earthworm in a hole, as you do, and never coming near your friends?'

'Like an earthworm! I do, eh? Was I not at that gathering of the O'Neils' the other night?'

'Pah! And I saw how you enjoyed yourself. I didn't mean there—I mean why don't you visit us now and again? You have given us up, and it is not right.'

'What have people like me to do with you—eh? You are a butterfly of fashion, and I'm an earthworm, and must be content to stay so.'

'Oh, well! but an earthworm comes up in the sun sometimes.'

'I know; and meets a bird—eh?'

'Don't talk nonsense,' she said, moving, almost unconsciously, a little closer to him. 'What have we—I—done to you? You snubbed me the other evening, and you sneered at me. Well, perhaps I deserved both; but, indeed, you might not be un-

kind to me! We used to be very good friends.'

Christy ceased speaking, and Sugrue stopped and, turning half-round, faced her. They both remained still. The oblique rays of the evening sun shone in his dark face and lighted up his eyes till they seemed to glow.

'Yes,' he repeated, 'we used to be good friends.' A swarm of midges were whirling above their heads, now lost to view in the shadow of the overhanging boughs, now gleaming again in the yellow light. They suddenly swept past her face, perhaps in the effort to avoid a swallow which darted across the road close to them with a sharp tiny scream. Christy flicked the gnats away with her handkerchief. 'But, as I tell you—you are a butterfly, and nothing else. How in the world could we be friends? I have to work for a living from

morning till night; and do you ever do, or think of, anything but amusing yourself?'

'Ah, but—if you knew. What is there for me to do? What is there ever for any girl like me to do? Don't imagine for one minute that it is so pleasant to be merely an incumbrance in the world. I am sure I am never done wishing I was somebody else.'

'Good!' said he, with a grim smile. 'That will help matters, won't it? So will gadding about the pier, and wasting time with——'

'Don't!' she said, wincing. 'I can't bear you to say that—besides, I can't help it. It is my business to make myself agreeable.'

'You can do that in another way. Look at Esther; no one could accuse her of flirting. You might take her as a model, I think.'

Christy answered nothing. He and she were walking now as far apart as the width of the path allowed.

'Do you mean that I should sing the melodies, eh ?'

There was a touch of Lanty in this that made Sugrue smile. He came a little nearer.

'No; I don't. Look how she gives two hours every Sunday to teach those poor girls in Father Macklin's school-house. That's what I mean.'

'Ah! but'—this was in her coaxing, complaining tone—'you know it is hard for me; and sometimes I go on like this, and really I don't care about it one bit. No, indeed.'

'I'll do you that much justice—I believe you. But I tell you, you ought not to fritter away your life as you do. Find something for other people's good, if not your own. All the mischief on earth grows

out of idleness—and you,' he added pointedly, 'have, for many reasons, need to be more watchful.'

'I read those books you told me of, you know.'

'Umph! Well! considering you have a natural love of reading—rare gift though the same be—I do not consider that a particularly great merit. You never sew, of course.'

'Yes, I do—indeed I do.'

'Wonderful! Oh! truly wonderful! For indeed, of all the convent-trained young ladies I ever heard of it is well said, "They sew not, neither do they read." You are sure you can sew? Have you—tell me truly, I implore—have you a thimble? a real practical thimble?'

'Yes. A couple of them.'

'And what do you sew? Cushions that no man dare lay his head on, and birds,

abominable birds, to be hung up under glass and called pole-screens?'

'Never. I hate those. I sew all sorts of things Minna's and Elsie's frocks and —and things.'

'That's good!' said Sugrue, dropping his serio-comic banter. 'For heaven's sake only let it be useful, and don't waste time while pretending to make use of it. What have you been doing to-day?'

She related briefly the day's programme.

'I know the old Father Considine. He is a learned man, but his love of books for their own sake has come to be a sort of passion — bibliomania. It is an extravagance. However, one can forgive that more easily than——'

'Ah!—than me!' interpolated Christy, with a smile at once humourous and bitter.

'Yes—than you. By-the-bye,' he took

out his watch, 'it is late. You had better go home.'

She stood still, as if to turn and go.

'I had certainly; and I have such a long walk now.'

He looked at her; she had turned her face a little sideways, so that it was half in shadow. The eyes looked almost black, and had a velvety softness beneath the drooped white lids, and the sun lighted up the brown plaits of hair.

He turned in a grudging, unwilling way, and began to walk quickly beside her. Christy said not a word; at every step she became more downcast and sad. At last she sighed so heavily that Sugrue, as if some sudden thought struck him, pushed back his hat nervously, and laid one hand on her arm.

'I did not mean to hurt you. You—you know that?'

'Oh yes,' she answered, with a sort of quiver in her voice, 'I do—I do; but it is easy to talk. What time have I ever to myself? I am eternally with her, and it is only when I ought to be sewing or practising that I can ever read. You have all your day by yourself.'

'A—ah!' he cried, with a long-drawn intonation, that had, if she only heard it, something almost of pain in it; 'do you, then, think it so nice to be always by one's self, eh?'

Low threads of cobwebs floated in the air, one went right across her face and tickled her cheek. She brushed it away silently with her small white fingers, then looked into his eyes with a gaze intense in its appealingness. Sugrue bit his nether lip hard, and looked away resolutely from her face out across the bay, that lay now in grey-blue shadow, though Howth was

basking in the evening glory of the sunset.

Christy uttered a sigh, impatient and passionate like the feeling that exhaled it, and turned her head away with a sort of despairing reckless gesture.

She had never answered his question save by that look, and he felt a torture of self-reproach for having brought it forth by his plaint. For it was a plaint, that one solitary self-revealment of his, and now she seemed waiting to hear more from him. Five steps more in silence. Every pebble seemed to reverberate under his feet, and if they had voices and complained aloud; the dusty nettles and battered dock-leaves could not have rustled more distinctly as her dress brushed them.

'You are as bad as my confessor,' she began, in a dull, complaining tone. 'All he can say to me is, "Go into a convent;"

and when I say I can't, I have no vocation, it is the same thing still—"Try! can't you try?"'

'Well, I say to you, don't.' He began in a broken tone that steadied, however, as he went on. 'I fancy that is not a thing to be *tried*, any more than marriage; though, indeed, you can slip out of one, but the other, no.'

'I'd like—I think I'd like to go on the stage.'

She reached up one hand and plucked a dry leaf that hung above her head. The smooth, lissom hand closed on the leaf and crushed it into a shapeless thing. He watched her look at it, then she let it fall at her feet, and shaking the dust from her palm, she struck both hands smartly together, and raised her eyes to his with a look that plainly said, 'I mean that, think what you will of it.'

'Humph! Why, then? If there is a why. Ha, ha! What a joke!'

He did indeed seem to consider it a joke.

Miss Carew's eyes flashed with a lurid light, and her cheeks became suffused with a bright, angry glow. For a moment it seemed as if she was going to attack him with fury; then came another mood, and the fire kindled in her beautiful eyes was hastily extinguished by great, full tear-drops.

'Eh!' he cried hastily; 'I thought you knew me better than to think I could mean to——'

'Ah, well! but you don't know how hard everything is.'

'I can give a pretty good guess. But it seems to me that the only way of making it better lies within your reach, and—Listen.' He took out his watch. 'You

must go. Do not talk wildly, or allow these strange ideas a place in your thoughts. Depend on it, sooner or later, the images we keep before our mind's eye end in actual deed. Find some occupation, and—don't think too much of yourself. It is not wholesome. Will you think of what I say ?'

'Yes,' she answered, still downcast; 'you know I will.'

Another thread of the web—one more mesh of the net.

'Good-bye,' he said, with an effort, holding out his hand. 'Good-bye.' She gave hers, and, carelessly or not, pressed his in her nervous warm grasp.

'You—you must walk quickly; and you know that path to the left through the turnstile is your quickest. Good-bye.'

He turned his face uphill, walking quickly and resolutely; and she continued

on her way home, feeling a dull, hopeless sensation, unusual enough to her, but which seemed to grow in intensity with every step. Suddenly she heard rapid, heavy footsteps close behind, and a hand was laid almost simultaneously on her shoulder. It was Sugrue, who had turned and run after her; he had taken the outer edge of the path, and among the weeds his feet made no noise.

'I wanted to ask you,' he said—his hand still remained on her shoulder—'to promise me one thing. I shall not see you for a good long time. Don't take any step—*any step*—without letting me know. I feel anxious about you, and I don't know I'm sure why I should. You will promise me, Christy?'

'Yes, Anthony—yes.'

CHAPTER V.

'Now, the world being thus divided into people of fashion and people of no fashion, a fierce contention arose between them, nor would those of one party, to avoid suspicion, be seen publicly to speak to those of the other, though they very often held a good correspondence in private.'—FIELDING.

SEPTEMBER passed by easy, almost imperceptible transition into ruddy October, which in its turn, with cold wild winds and nipping frosts, hurried to meet its chill gloom-laden successors, November and December. And the new year presented itself with a

brief passing glimpse of a sunny smile that was soon ended as it began in a veil of grey fog.

The lord mayor elect had passed from the chrysalis state to that of imago, and was now actual lord mayor, and installed with his family in the great white mansion in Dawson Street. It was the first time that Hugh O'Neil had accepted this dignity, though it had been more than once pressed upon him by the municipality. A Puritan in heart, he detested the cumbrous state and magnificence of the new order of things, and the great chain of office galled and wearied him, though he wore it religiously from morning till night, and under a sense of duty, much more ostentatiously than his predecessor, who had been lord mayor four different times, had ever done.

It was decidedly against his own in-

clinations that his spiritual advisers and his wife had pushed him into taking the office. To say 'and his wife,' is scarcely fair to that lady; for she, as may be supposed, was a mere lever in the hands of the Church party, who, with the whisky faction, rule municipal politics in Dublin. O'Neil was pliant enough in all matters that did not run counter to his religion or his politics. These were, as a matter of course, Whig, of the most uncompromising type. He was born to Whiggism, an inheritance of which his father was not much longer in possession than himself. If one could have tabulated and assorted the worthy O'Neil's principles of all kinds on all subjects, they would be found to be Conservative of the deepest dye. And there are many worthy electors, invariably of the respectable better classes, of which the same may be safely predicated, though

they would repudiate the insinuation with scorn. Conservatism is the essence of the Roman Catholicism of which the chief magistracy is a type; nevertheless, however fond of imitating American peculiarities, the passion for distinguishing various political sects with specific titles has not yet infected the Irish, and the school to which O'Neil belonged is still merged in the indistinct confused body at large of Roman Catholics. Infallibility, which had proved too much for the digestion of many, even of this very school, had been accepted without one quaver of dissent by him, and he never allowed the subject to be discussed in his presence. As a rule, however, it was only from among the ranks of the professionals—doctors and lawyers, and those of kindred followings—that the great dogma found opponents. Our friend the crown-solicitor,

Carew, who had always been a careless Catholic, notwithstanding the duty of example, which it was considered he owed that shining light among converts, his wife, never knew or cared anything about that dogma or any other, and shrugged his shoulders invariably when a topic bearing on polemics came up in conversation.

But there were others who held a middle place between these two, neither so unceasingly zealous nor so obtusely obedient as O'Neil, nor so apathetically indifferent nor generously tolerant as Carew, and who, though never in mixed company, maintained resolutely, with that *esprit de corps* which is, like other social features, a survival from past ages, that Infallibility was a mischievous and useless graft on a stock already overloaded; a novelty, the outcome of senile vanity; and a wanton

flourish of defiance from impotence, discontented with its insignificance.

Ranelagh, a hard-headed solicitor of good standing, whose Chancery practice had brought him into contact with some of the keenest intellects of the day, quietly added the new dogma to that of the Intercession of Saints, which he had long laid aside on a shelf in his own mind, labelled 'Useless and Doubtful.'

Many of us have such a shelf, where we store the odd lumber, wrecked hopes, and lost illusions, broken friendships and creeds, like old clothes that we have outgrown, or have shed, as the snake sheds its skin, and that we keep by us as if, like the snake's covering, they were endowed with some subtle magic quality.

A young barrister or two, of parliamentary proclivities, had been known to express hostility to a manifesto which

avowedly widened the breach between them and the class representing that culture and refinement towards which the most fervid Ultramontane unconsciously strives; but the massive indifference or docile acquiescence of the unreasoning mob, trained to passive receptivity, soon imposed its will upon the dissidents, and they allowed themselves to swim with the stream, nor dared ever with solitary effort to stem its sluggish flow.

Now, a few years after, it is all done and forgotten, and the more so because the Œcumenical Council forgot to set a day to keep the nations in mind of the present it had made them. There is a Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and it was surely a strange oblivion on the part of the holy fathers not to make a Feast of the Infallibility also. They probably thought that the faithful would

have reason to think on the subject every day. As, indeed, some of them had.

Mrs. O'Neil, on her side, contemplated her elevation with very mixed feelings. She had had many opportunities of studying the *vie intime* of lady mayoresses, so was not dismayed at the ponderous array of duties that lay before her. The entertainments to be given and received were the most obnoxious part of them; but even that had its compensating side.

Esther, the eldest of her fair daughters, and the darling of her heart, would have opportunities of seeing the world, and contracting, perhaps, an alliance which should present every feature of desirability from a financial, religious, and social point of view. She was intensely proud of her husband, and took all the homage and attention paid herself, however clearly

she might discern the motive of most of it, for she was by no means destitute of penetration or judgment—with much the same feeling with which a steward receives payments on his master's account.

There was one great drawback to her peace of mind. She could not, as a good housekeeper and manager, reconcile herself to that self-effacement as to the commissariat and maintaining of the household which was required of her by the functionaries whose province it was to look after these departments. And it was not for a long time that she could seat herself at the head of her own table without an uncomfortable sensation of ignorance as to ways and means, that made her feel, as she said to her confident, Mrs. Dunne, 'as if she were a guest in her own house.'

Esther found the magnificence rather dull; the novelty of the big uncomfortable house

had worn off after the first week, though it was still strange and unhomelike, and as the younger sisters and brothers had been packed off to school before their holidays were fairly over, in order to have them out of the way, she felt a little lonely.

Philomena was unremitting in her attendance, but the Mansion House pianos were in no way like Esther's Broadwood grand, which was left shut up in solitude and silence in the big deserted mansion in Gardiner's Street; and Philomena, though she thought that in her friend's elevation she had attained the summit of earthly bliss, learned also the cruel lesson that sages and poets from all time have been teaching us, 'No roses without thorns.' But for this drawback Philomena would certainly have been supremely happy. She never was tired rambling about the Mansion House,

and the front seat of the state carriage, which she shared with a fat little chaplain, was a seventh heaven to her. She was mortally afraid of all the servants, and with difficulty refrained from addressing the footmen as 'sir'—their powdered heads impressed her so tremendously.

The 18th of January was the day of the first drawing-room of the season, and the ladies of the Mansion House were to be presented that same evening to the representative of her gracious Majesty, and remained at home on thoughts of millinery intent. Lunch was over, and the hand of the huge gilt clock pointed a quarter to three. Mrs. Dunne and the lady mayoress were talking in a monotonous undertone, that was as wearisome as the drip, drip of a fountain, or the endless tick of an importunate timepiece. Esther had yawned twice. Philomena, silent ever, was staring at the

great centrepiece, which was filled with artificial flowers of the most odious description. At last the whispering of the elder women got to be unbearable, and Esther jumped up.

'Philomena, I'll go out.'

'Eh? now? and tire yourself before night? Nothing of the kind, Esther. And it's no day for you to walk through town. No.'

'Oh, mamma, I want to go to Mountjoy Square.'

'You will see the Carews to-night, and mighty glad they'll be to see you,' she added *sotto voce* to the sympathetic Mrs. Dunne.

'Let us go, mamma. If I don't go out I shall have a headache. I feel one coming.'

'Well—well, go then. Ring and order the brougham. I hope there's a man to

drive you, that's all. I never know who's who, or who is to do one blessed thing here.'

She had returned to the charge with Mrs. Dunne, and Esther and Philomena set off for the upper regions. Once arrived in her own room, Miss O'Neil let herself fall into an easy-chair by the fire, and sighed.

Philomena followed more sedately. She went over to the bed, which seemed piled up wonderfully and covered with a huge linen sheet. She raised a corner of the sheet and looked under, then let it fall with an awestruck look.

'Esther darling, maybe ye oughtn't go out now, indeed.'

'Philomena! oh, Philomena!'

Esther was buttoning her boots as she uttered this mild acknowledgment of her friend's remonstrance.

'Bee-yu-tiful! o-oh!'

Philomena was peering now into a box which contained Miss O'Neil's court-plumes and headdress, holding her breath lest she should ruffle the feathers and laces.

'Is that the carriage, Philomena?' asked Esther. 'And you are not ready!'

Miss Dunne hastily made her toilet, and they ran downstairs together.

'Mamma,' cried Esther, as she passed the boudoir-door, 'don't forget to have the bouquets put in water when they come. Please don't!'

Then they jumped into the brougham, and giving the necessary directions, were soon on their way to the north side of the town. On the south side of the river it seemed gay and lively enough, but on the other side of Carlisle Bridge, the city had resumed its dull, sleepy look. The carriages and vehicles of all sorts became

few and far between. A tawny mist hung over the roofs, and the frost of the previous night had given place to a soft greasy atmosphere. The dirty shop-fronts and general grimness of Sackville Street seemed to become more and more apparent as they approached Rutland Square and the semi-ruinous houses that stand at the corners of Summer Hill and Britain Street.

The brougham turned the corner of George's Street, and soon drew up at the Carews' house in Mountjoy Square. The hall-door was standing open. Some messenger was delivering parcels, and as Esther, who jumped out without waiting to let the footman make inquiries, passed in, she caught sight of Mrs. Carew's head projected over a balustrade on the third floor of the well-staircase. And a very comical appearance the same head pre-

sented. The forehead was surmounted by a little grove of tissue-paper branches, twisted into all sorts of horns. The rest of the hair, of which there was not too much, was plaited up tight in thin long braids. She had a peignoir of very dubious colour, evidently caught up in a hurry and twisted round her shoulders only, for she held it in its place with one hand. She did not see Esther, or did not notice her, so absorbed was she in watching the parcels that the servant was carrying in from the door, and in screaming questions to him from her altitude. These were not too intelligible in themselves, and the reverberation in the great skylight in the roof did not help to make them more so.

Esther, puzzled, stood for an instant at the door. The servant had run to the foot of the stairs, and, with his back turned to

the hall-door, was shouting up in reply to his mistress :

'No, ma'am, 'tis from the tailor's and the grocer's man.' Then *sotto voce* in a rage, 'That they may never come—moidered I am wid ye!' Turning round he caught sight of the young lady, 'I beg pard'n, miss, I do indeed; but really, we're that busy I never seen ye. The mistress is out, but I'll go and try for her and Miss Christy this minute.'

The peignoir and curl-papers disappeared with something like a groan, and Miss O'Neil ascended the stairs to the drawing-room. Before she had got half-way she heard a well-known voice hail her by name, and again turning her eyes heavenward, this time a story higher, she beheld Christy, with a white satin shoe in one hand, waving her upward.

'The fire's gone out in the drawing-

room, Esther. Trot up here; I want you.'

Esther obeyed the invitation, and followed Miss Carew into her room. It presented a curious spectacle. It was a large room with two windows looking out, and down on the square. One small white bed stood lengthwise by the wall, another was in a recess at the opposite end, having evidently been pushed out of their accustomed places. A wardrobe yawned open, and, with a large chest of drawers, seemed in a condition of effervescence. The middle of the room was cleared, and a cheval glass occupied the post of honour.

'My wedding garment has come, and is all right,' said Miss Carew, nodding to a corner where lay a couple of huge pasteboard boxes; 'and, tell me, Esther, what do you think of these?' she had tucked her

hands into a pair of high-heeled white satin shoes, and held them out, surveying their rosettes with immense gratification.

'Charming! I suppose,' said Esther, 'you are practising your curtsey. I forgot all about mine, and as I don't want to tumble over, as poor Eily Connolly did, I think I'll just take off my hat and coat and have one more try at it.'

'Do,' said Christy. 'I managed one very nicely just before you came in. The mistress is in one of what Lanty calls her "bakes." Madame Mandolette has not sent her train home yet. Minna and Elsie have had a whipping apiece, and altogether it is trying. Yes, that's right. I shall just sit here and look on; you can make two or three, and then I can take a turn.'

Esther having removed her hat and heavy winter-coat, advanced until within a few feet of the long mirror, and then made

an obeisance so graceful, so low, and recovering herself with such lissom perfect unconsciousness of movement, that Christy allowed a cry of admiration to escape her, and, jumping up, laid aside the white shoes hastily.

'Oh, my dear, you're perfect! I shall never be able to equal that.'

'That you won't,' said a voice at the open door. 'You can't come nearer than a cheese. I should be ashamed of such a bob as you make. How do you do, Esther?' continued Lanty, who by this had entered and crossed the room to the astonished visitor.

Lanty had grown nearly a couple of inches, and, in many other ways, had much progressed since we last beheld him. He was handsomer than before, though rather pale and weedy, as boys of his age usually are.

He was a very dignified young person just now; having not long passed his entrance examination into Trinity College, with great credit to himself and his preceptor, Antony Sugrue. He had a great opinion of his own consequence, and flew in fine rages if any addressed his letters 'Master Carew.' Wonderful changes for a few months to bring about.

In one respect there was no improvement in Mr. Carew, junior. He was as idle as ever; as fond of fun and of hearing himself speak, and his step-mother was quite as much afraid of him. In fact, save on some one or two points on which the little lady was as incorrigible as himself, he had her pretty well in hand.

Christy took his gibe with the equanimity which characterised her dealings with most people. She quietly signed Esther to sit down in her place, and, heed-

less of Lanty, who had taken up a critical attitude cross-legged on a chair, she spread out her dress and made a deep reverence to her own image in the glass.

'Faugh!' sneered Lanty, 'if you would just say "Light of heaven to yer sowl! and throw us a copper, yer honour," you would look like an old beggar-woman bobbing for halfpennies in the street. Do you imagine his excellency will ever kiss the like of you?'

'Oh! by-the-bye, I had forgotten that little ceremony,' Christy exclaimed, forgetting to finish her curtsey, and turning round to them. 'Esther, how do you think we shall endure it?—shall you laugh?'

'N-no—why?'

Esther opened her eyes wide with a naïve air of astonishment.

'Nothing; I was wondering, that's all.

Your mamma will be kissed too, no doubt —what a funny idea! But then *she* has made up her mind to everything, I know.'

The last part of Miss Carew's speech was an impertinence, repeated in that almost mechanical manner which people often fall into who allow themselves the habit of making flippant, sarcastic speeches at their friends' expense.

At lunch, about an hour before Esther's arrival, Mrs. Carew, whose temper, variously tried this day, was none too dulcet, had been sitting in the seat of the scorner generally, and delivering herself of many social judgments. Christy had been listening to her without agreeing in the least with her diatribes, but the sharp, sneering talk had nevertheless, and particularly as there was a grain of drollery in it, left an impression on her mind, of which the above was the direct outcome.

Esther, always literal and simple, saw not a trace of offence meant; but Lanty from the back of her chair darted a look of rage and insolence at his sister, and marched direct out of the room.

Christy, who regretted her speech as soon as it was uttered, and saw all its import in a second by the light of her brother's proceeding, bit her tongue; then she rose, and, walking over to Esther, stooped and kissed her cheek affectionately.

'Get up and make me another curtsey, like a jewel, that I may copy you.'

Esther obeyed good-humouredly; and, after a few essays in imitation of her friend, Christy soon produced a very fair copy.

'You would do well to imitate her in some other ways too.'

Lanty had come back, and, with his

hands in his pockets, was carelessly lounging against the doorpost.

'Just look at your room! Good lack! what a mess! Could you shut that press if you were to try, I wonder? and the drawers—and the bandboxes?'

'I think, sir,' said a sharp voice that made all of them start with surprise, 'you might look at home with advantage. What state is your study in after you have done with it? How do you do, Miss O'Neil? Indeed, Christina, I don't know what Miss O'Neil can think of being brought into such a room as this. You must forgive my treating you *sans cérémonie*,' Mrs. Carew continued, with an affable smile, though a frown was plainly discernible at the same time beneath the forest of curl-papers.

Sans cérémonie, in this case, meant an uncommonly droll figure. She had in-

serted her arms in the sleeves of the peignoir, and had buttoned it up, though all crookedly; and she had on one high-heeled shoe and one bath-slipper, which rather detracted from the usual grace of her deportment.

Christy laughed, and so did Lanty; for, to tell the truth, it was an uncommon occurrence to find Mrs. Carew in deshabille. In deshabille as she was, she contrived to retain her patronising manner, and seated herself, peignoir and curl-papers notwithstanding, very gracefully in a dilapidated cane-bottomed chair.

'I hope your mamma is quite well; and by this, of course,' she continued, barely waiting for the assurance of the lady mayoress's health, 'you are all quite at home, and comfortably settled in the Mansion House. I often think, notwithstanding the privileges, and so to say,

honour and glory of such a position, that the fatigues and bore almost prevent one's enjoying it. To-night will be something dreadful!'

'Papa does dislike it, I think,' said Esther.

But Mrs. Carew went on, heedless to all appearance of this interpellation, though in reality replying to it.

'I always pitied the poor marchioness—her excellency, you know. Dragged from her friends, her own set, such an uprooting as it must be! and then she hates Ireland so, detests Dublin to such an extent, and no wonder, for I am sure of all the odious set of wretches that could be got together this place is blessed with them.'

Here Mrs. Carew, having demonstrated to her own satisfaction that her sympathies lay naturally with uprooted marchionesses

rather than with lady mayoresses, passed by an easy transition to her own pet grievance against her nationality.

'That Mandolette, wretch! Never sent home one bit of my robe yet. Promised it, swore it—in French certainly, and they say oaths in that language count for nothing. I was to have had it yesterday, in case of alterations being needed. Here now, what o'clock is it?'

Esther, whose face, to the amusement of the other young people, expressed compassion and interest, pulled out a tiny *créloque* of a watch, and Christy, who was longing to laugh, turned to hers, which was lying on the dressing-table. After a glance at the dial, she said:

'A quarter to four.'

The watch had stopped at that hour twelve hours before, never having been wound the previous night.

'Past four, Christy,' said Esther, holding up hers.

'Who ever knew women's watches to be unanimous?' said Lanty. 'What on earth you are given them for, save in the interests of trade, I can't imagine. Strike an average, ma'am, between them, and you may hit somewhere on it. Let's assume, or as the sailors say, make it, four o'clock.'

'If you had the least symptom of amiability in your disposition, you would volunteer to go down and hurry Madame Mandolinette, or at least bring back word that I am not to be disappointed and cheated too. Ah, now, Lanty!'

The threatening, scolding tone in which this speech began gradually changed and softened, till it culminated with a blandishing, coaxing drawl on the 'Ah, now, Lanty!' that sent that young gentleman into a fit of laughter.

'Lanty,' his step-mother went on, 'I wish you would. It will be dreadful if I—we are disappointed. Think of the dress never coming — never coming at all; and, oh dear, such a bill as it will be, too!'

Here she heaved a deep sigh.

This last consideration, urged as a stimulus to his exertions, seemed to tickle Lanty's fancy immensely.

'That Mandolette, to think of her! Why, I made that woman, Miss O'Neil. I sent her all her custom. Judge Armstrong's people, the Westertons and D'Arcys, and no end of people I recommended her to. But it's like those wretches all the world over. Ingratitude, and contempt and insult, you get from them as soon as ever they can live without you. No wonder the country is what it is. Now, Lanty dear, you have nothing to do, and

but limited — somewhat in this order. Lanty saved the trouble of going, and consequently likely to be at her orders for some other emergency. Then, the effect of the carriage on the recalcitrant Mandolette, and that, too, a new carriage of the new lord mayor's, in all the bloom of fresh paint, new liveries, and immaculate wigs. It really was to be useful and effective in more points than one, and it was kind to offer it; but then—and here the unworthy and mercantile part of her soul stepped in to have its say—it was really no trouble whatever to Miss O'Neil, not a particle; and no doubt she was only too happy, like all that class of people, to offer—nay, to thrust—services, with of course an interested motive behind, on people who of course knew how to appreciate them at their due.

So, with an attempt at her usual con-

descending amiability, which was somewhat marred by the predominance of the meditation second in order, she was thanking Esther ceremoniously, when her stepson burst out:

'I can't think of allowing it! No—I am going myself. Esther, who is with you in the carriage? It won't do, I say. Your father could not approve of your stopping on any such message, and especially now, when the streets are full.'

'Nonsense, Lanty!' said his stepmother, so petulantly, as to drown Esther's disclaimer.

Christy said not a word. She saw the justice of her brother's cause, and was rather pleased with his determination than otherwise. The pair took a mischievous pleasure in thwarting the little lady's patronising ways, and in particular the small meannesses which nature and bring-

ing up prompted, and which her social position gave her the opportunity of practising.

They were not a little proud of her at the same time. A Poyntsett and a third cousin of Lord Bunratty. Lord Bunratty was only a Union lord, at the very sound of whose name Hugh O'Neil's nose always curled; beside the O'Neil lion, a very wretched mongrel of a live dog indeed. But the O'Neil lion was as dead as roast leg of mutton to all the world save his descendant, whose imagination endowed the beast with wondrous qualities, whereas the Bunratty dog was flourishing and in full feather.

Lanty, for all his force of character, was not above mentioning that cousinship in the course of conversation now and again. But it is worthy of remark that he never did so in Antony Sugrue's presence.

Sugrue, in fact, kept these young people in wholesome control, while they, in turn, lorded it over their stepmother.

'I'm going,' continued Lanty stubbornly, turning to leave the room.

Mrs. Carew resigned herself with a smile that had an ominous unreality about it. How she would have liked to cuff Lanty's ears. She had done that once before—certainly under strong provocation—but he had made it an expensive luxury. Presently the street door clapped to with a rattle. He was gone. She bit her lips and rose.

'Shall we have a fit of hysterics?' thought Christy. 'No. That's too unbecoming.'

'I must leave you, Miss O'Neil. But don't go on that account, pray. We shall meet this evening, unless—well—unless the worst happens—ha! ha!—and Madame Mandolette disappoints.'

'Nonsense,' said Christy. 'Mamma, you know that's impossible.'

Esther noticed the vexed expression of the little lady's face; there were actually tears of mortification trembling on her blonde eyelashes. She hastily jumped up saying:

'Don't mind Lanty, Mrs. Carew. I shall call at the dressmaker's all the same, as we go. I will, indeed—perhaps he will forget it.'

'Oh, thank you, ever so much, Miss O'Neil! You are really good.'

She meant this speech literally and simply, for once, for the spontaneous sympathy of the girl had touched her, but at that moment a loud knock resounded up through the house, and she ran off at the call of a servant, who announced a hairdresser from Birch's.

'Ugh!' said Christy, always matter-of-

fact, 'let's go back to the curtseys. Esther, don't go till you see me make one or two more. Five o'clock, is it. Well, five hours more, or six, and I shall know if I have tumbled over on my back and disgraced myself for ever, or not.'

CHAPTER X.

'*Shepherd.* Are you a courtier, an't like you, sir?

'*Autolycus.* Whether it like me or no, I am a courtier. Seest thou not the air of the court in these unfoldings? hath not every gait in it the measure of the court? receives not thy nose court odour from me? reflect I not on thy baseness court contempt? Thinkest thou, for that I insinuate, or teaze from thee thy business, I am therefore no courtier? I am courtier cap-a-pie; and one that will either push on or pluck back thy business there: whereupon I command thee to open thy affair.'—*Winter's Tale*, act iv.

FIVE hours had passed, and Miss Carew's fears as to her eternal disgrace were at rest. She had even forgotten that she had ever felt a doubt of any sort on the subject, and was enjoy-

ing herself thoroughly. She had seen Esther's presentation, and, in common with all those who had, admired her exquisite grace and simple unconsciousness; nor had her sharp eyes failed to note that one of the aids-in-waiting seemed peculiarly impressed by Miss O'Neil.

Once that they had reached St. Patrick's Hall, however, the civic party and the Carews separated—a feat cleverly contrived by Mrs. Carew, who had forgiven Mandolette long ago, and who, conscious of a robe that was at once perfectly becoming and in point of richness scarcely inferior to that of any lady present, looked serenely happy and exceedingly pretty. The curl-papers had vanished, and the small head was piled with tiny round blond curls, amongst which her court-plumes were nestled gracefully. Christina, dressed in the *débutante* uniform of white silk and tulle,

kept close at her step-mother's elbow, and looked as demure as a white marble cherub, save for her mischievous hazel eyes, which were taking in everything and everybody around, as she moved about under Mrs. Carew's protecting *ægis*.

Shortly after Mrs. Carew had detached herself from the O'Neil party, they were followed in to the Hall by a sister of hers — a fresh-faced stout dame of some eight and thirty years, who had married, not long before, a country gentleman named Rochford, whom she had unwillingly dragged up to town for the season. There were a good many of the Poyntsett connection present to-night, with Lord Bunratty at their head, who though far off and all but a minor star—a mere satellite, indeed, to the great orb of Viceregal magnificence—was casting a distinguished refulgence on his own planets. Mrs.

Carew had never spoken to him in her life. She was, however, from the constant study of his lordship's photograph, pretty familiar with his illustrious lineaments, and was consequently able to point him out with certainty to her own friends. Besides, her sister, Mrs. Rochford, whose husband's place was in the same county, had been called upon by the carriage from Bunratty Castle, on the event of her bridal home-coming, some few years ago, and having been at a croquet party within the same sacred precincts, was entitled to be considered an intimate, and as such, was in much request as a reference and authority by the rest of the family. There was not indeed very much to say on the subject, for Lord Bunratty was not interesting from any point of view. He was poor for his position in life, which was nothing very great, the title dating merely from the

Union; and personally he was a disagreeable, not too well conducted old bachelor.

Mrs. Rochford was a very sensible, good-humoured sort of woman, thoroughly content with her success in life, late as it had come to her. She was the eldest of the Poyntsett sisterhood, and was much older than Mrs. Carew, about whom she had many misgivings.

'There you are, Christy, happy at last, eh?' she said in her jovial, full-toned voice, which had more than a suspicion of brogue in it, but which, nevertheless, could not for one moment be mistaken for the *ah*xent of common people.

While speaking to Christy, she was running her eye critically over her sister's court train. "Real lace, and what a quantity of it; and his income is decidedly under a thousand a year. Goose! what can she be thinking of?—hem.' Then aloud:

'Yes; it is a wonder to see Lord Bunratty here, Mr. Armstrong, fine-looking, do you think? I don't know if it is a pity he never married. Fortunate for his wife, I should say.'

Mrs. Carew glanced at her reproachfully.

'You don't know him as well as I do, Caroline,' Mrs. Rochford said, in reply to the glance. 'Where is Edward Carew? Oh, I see him, with my husband.'

Mr. Rochford, a stoutly-built red-faced man, with a curly head and a good-looking but rather stupid face, arrived first through the crowd to the group.

'Harriet,' he said, after greeting Mrs. Carew, 'have you seen the Almonds?'

'Wentworth and Susan here!' she cried, in astonishment. 'Caroline, Susan and Almond are here.'

'Never!' cried Mrs. Carew, 'without saying a word about it to anyone?'

'She said in her last letter to me from the Curragh, that they were to be in town early this week.'

'Caroline and Harriett!' cried a voice, that seemed at once near and far.

A head, which had a strong family likeness to Mrs. Carew's, nodded at them from the other side of an intervening group.

'Can't get near you,' continued the voice, the owner of which seemed in no way concerned to do so.

The head then nodded again and beat a retreat.

'Just as well; there she goes now,' observed Mrs. Rochford, vainly trying to see her sister; 'and where is he, I wonder? However, he can't get into mischief here. Dear me! Edward, there you are at last. I began to think you were avoiding me.'

Mr. Carew's tall burly figure and hand-

some countenance now made their appearance, he having at last penetrated the throng.

'Well, Charlotte? carried your point as usual, I see. What a crowd there is here to-night. You Tories all rally round your flag, don't you? I'm sure it was purely to show his fidelity to his party that brought Rochford up to town — eh? Nothing else on earth. Ha! ha! You are the woman to keep him up to the mark in everything. How well you look. Yes.'

And Mr. Carew, who was no more than mortal, removed his eyes from the buxom charms of Mrs. Rochford to let them rest with a really pleased expression on his wife's more elegant and juvenile person.

'Old fool!' was Mrs. Rochford's mental reply. She knew a good deal of the Carew *ménage*.

Presently he turned to Christy.

'Hum! You seem slightly in the background, my dear; if you want to see or be seen, I think we must get you a chair to stand on.'

This was unkind on his part, for he knew that Christy's short stature was, according to Mrs. Carew, an insuperable drawback to her good looks.

She only laughed, however; and the Crown solicitor went on this time to Mrs. Rochford again.

'I believe I have only two children. Lanty and the baby—they are both long-legged like myself. I say, Caroline, have you seen the Mansion House party?'

Caroline uttered a hasty 'No,' accompanied by a look which said plainly that the question was an unwelcome one.

The last presentation had been made, and the last train bundled out of sight through the door leading to a room

between the throne room and St. Patrick's Hall. His excellency looked tired and cross, and the chamberlain was whispering rapid directions to the *aids.*

In a few minutes the whole company put themselves in motion. The door was thrown wide open, and the procession, headed by the viceroy and his wife, sailed slowly down the great hall. The pages-in-waiting held her excellency's train gracefully as she walked along, bowing right and left to those whom she recognised in the crowd. The great mirrors gave back countless reflections—green, blue, and red —from her diamond coronet and earrings, and the gay coloured dresses on either side moved and rustled stiffly to and fro in admiration, just like a bed of gorgeous tulips, when a strong south wind ruffles them, as the pageant passed, slowly but surely to the great door at the end of the

hall, and there remained for a little while before retiring.

'Here come the Jocelyns!' cried Mrs. Rochford, bowing and smiling, 'I saw young Neville. How well he looks in the Household livery.'

A group of people were advancing directly upon them. Two ladies in front bowed very stiffly in response to Mrs. Rochford's salutation, and, after a keen glance at her party, swept aside suddenly, and took a new direction through the throng.

Mrs. Carew, who knew young Neville, but not his family, caught his eye immediately that she heard his name, and threw him a glance and smile so gracious and engaging that he quitted his mother and sisters and advanced at once in her direction.

Christy, who had seen everything—the

abrupt and unmistakable avoidance of her party by his, and her stepmother's eager manner as well, felt full of anger and contempt. She abruptly turned away as Mr. Jocelyn came up, and went to her father's side.

Jocelyn was a very young man, not twenty-four, with a bright, handsome face, and roving eyes of a soft deep blue colour, with eyelashes and brows much darker than his hair. He was flattered, and amused too, by the evident favour with which he was received, and took a patronising air at once.

Christy would not even look round. The crowd was too thick and close now for her to see anybody, and she gathered up her train tighter on her arm, and began to feel bored and tired. Everybody had come to St. Patrick's Hall, and the band was playing a loud Wagner-like arrangement-

Something set the party in motion and they began at a slow pace to make the round of the great hall. Mr. Jocelyn's eyes were wandering everywhere with an anxious persistency. At last he said:

'You know them, don't you?—the Lord Mayor's people. Charming girl, Miss O'Neil — everybody's admiration to-night.'

She affected not to know whom he meant. It was important that Mr. Jocelyn should not suppose that the O'Neils were in her set.

'Well—ah!—yes—*pretty*,' with an emphasis on the word that gave it a wonderful negative significance. 'She is that. Oh yes! The colouring, hair, eyes and figure I must say are decidedly pretty—indeed they are perfect, quite perfect—but——' She put up her eyebrows and her shoulders ever so little.

He looked at her questioningly. Mrs. Carew was too well read to fall into the common feminine trick of denying all beauty to other women. In these days only an utterly illiterate person could commit such a solecism. Novelists and playwrights have so well marked the characteristics and idiosyncrasies of social vices that any one of moderate intelligence can recognise and avoid their outward forms. Her jealousy was there all the time —the quantity was invariable, whatever the form might be—it was a mere *changement de face.*

'These good looks, you know, without—er—culture,' she did not like to say the word that had occurred to her—'R.Cs.' She nodded her head, as if that accounted for everything, then, suddenly remembering that she herself, now belonged to that body, she added hastily: 'R.Cs. of

the—er—common class. Oh, well! you know—rather trading-people.'

Mr. Jocelyn nodded. He remembered her saying something of the same kind to him the evening he first met the young lady, and he thought the information as unnecessary now, as he had then thought it uncalled for.

However, a sudden turn brought them right abreast of the Lord Mayor's party, Hugh O'Neil with the great chain of office displayed in all its ponderous magnificence, and the Lady Mayoress, crimson all over, and looking as tired and as cross as well could be.

Mrs. Carew thought to pass deftly with a gracious inclination of her curls and plumes, but her husband had no such intention. He stopped at once with Christy, who was quite willing, nay, glad to do so on one arm, and Mrs. Rochford, who did

not care in the least, on the other. Mrs. Carew could not help herself, and her displeasure was intensified when Jocelyn darted forward to renew his acquaintance with Esther O'Neil.

'I have been looking for you for an hour at least,' he said. 'Where can you have been hidden?'

They were standing near the musicians now, and the sudden clang of a loud crescendo drowned her reply. Jocelyn ought to have been in his place with Lord Quorn and his party, but he remained, careless of everything. He had been watching an opportunity to see her again. Since her presentation his eyes had wandered round and round the great hall, in the hope of lighting on her again. He recollected the buzz of admiration that went round the circle when she walked up before that critical audience. The sweet, blushing face

and graceful, modest bearing. 'A blonde cherub looking out of a rift in a cloud,' some one had compared her to, with her floating waves of soft diaphanous drapery. And now he could not find a word to say.

'Yes, yes—charming!' he replied to Mrs. Carew, who was saying how warm the air was.

The music seemed to be like a storm. Scarlet and white, gold and azure, every colour was swaying by in a queer phantasmagoria, and a torrent of voices almost drowned the undercurrent of the music. Mrs. Carew's scented pocket-handkerchief sent out a strong odour of violets. What a confusion! Not one word could he find to say to Esther, whose soft eyes seemed to rivet themselves to his. She recognised him; he saw it, and he compelled her to acknowledge him. She was holding out

her hand, impelled she could not tell by what influence, and to the disgust and wonder of Mrs. Carew, Jocelyn had taken it in his, when someone, also in household uniform, passed quickly, and stooping towards the aid, jerked an indistinct word or two in his ear.

He started, and without a look even to any of the party, was gone. The Mansion House contingent, an enormous tribe of people all more or less signed with the mark of the beast, struggled off, on its own business intent.

'Where have you been?' asked a friend of Jocelyn's, another aide-de-camp. 'You noticed Mrs. Mullooly. Her red gown is something superhuman. She's brought another daughter this time—herself in duodecimo. The lord mayor ain't half bad—dignified-looking. Dare say he thinks if we all had our due, he'd be in the duke's

place. Madame is a gem, a regular Irish diamond, but sensible looking. Hope to heaven she doesn't talk! It is the dooce when they will talk. Have you seen the daughter, Miss O'Neil, eh? Pretty, do you think? Yes; quiet, nice-looking party rather, but ain't my style a bit.'

'Humph!' Mr. Jocelyn was looking round for some one. 'I thought I had a glimpse of the Armstrongs that minute. No, it's my mother and Lord Turbitton. I'll wait till he drops off. What a number of red coats!'

'Yes, rather. I don't suppose there is a fellow in the county possesses a uniform that isn't here to-night. The rest are doctors and lawyers, ain't they? Wonderfully loyal the learned professions are here. Look at that rum old boy!'

The speaker was English and a new comer.

'That rum old boy is a judge, and then I say you don't know, Pierpoint, that the learned professions here are different altogether from what they are in London.

Look at that man talking to the woman in red: he is a surgeon. Well, his daughter is a countess; that man—another doctor—has married a distant cousin of ours, a daughter of Lord Portrush.'

'You don't tell me so! There, her excellency wants me; don't go away, Jocelyn, I want you, in a minute.'

Then the English aide-de-camp hastened to his post, gliding through the crowd with his cocked hat held at a cautious angle in front of him.

The refreshment tables were crowded still, and the band in the gallery gave no symptom of weariness. The flirtation corners were all full, and, though not in one of them, Miss Carew was as busy as

any of their inmates with a briefless barrister. He was paying her attention with a view to her papa's favour, and she knew this perfectly, and was mystifying the gentleman to the top of his bent.

The O'Neils had gone, Esther, seated well forward in the front of the great state coach, so as not to crush her new court train, was puzzled to account for the presence of the fair-haired aide-de-camp in her thoughts, and perhaps she was of all the crowd the best pleased and the happiest.

Their excellencies gone, the *élite* of the guests followed their example; but for a full half hour or more the ordinary guests ranged through the rooms at their will. The legal contingent exerted all their powers of self-assertion, and walked about with the air of being at home. The county people patronised them at their

leisure, and kept their ranks closed carefully against outsiders and City people. And the Cits, or R. Cs., conscious of dresses, quite as rich, paid no attention to anything or anybody outside their own ken. A few of them modified their accents in that inimitable manner, that only their species can attain, and looked a little uneasy and conscious of superior, though unrecognised, merit. In this last, however, they were by no means alone. Taken altogether, the ladies of this persuasion looked the happiest and jolliest of all the crowd.

Christina, on the whole, enjoyed herself. She found plenty of food for amusement. She had Mr. W. Desmond O'Kelly, one of the famous O'Kellys of Timahoo, entirely to herself, and drew out his reminiscences of London and his Timahoo brogue as completely as her mischievous fancy dictated. Mr. O'Kelly was older than

Anthony Sugrue, and was a full-blown barrister of ten years' standing. He knew Sugrue, and had a thorough contempt for him, as a plodding, spiritless fellow, always with his nose to the grindstone. Christy took an almost impish pleasure in making him talk of Sugrue. Mr. O'Kelly had all the vulgar regard for his particular profession that still invests it like a halo, and which is another survival from the old days of disabilities, when only a Protestant, and that too a wealthy Protestant, could practise law. The journey to London twice or three times a year confers a wonderful prestige on 'the counsellors,' as their admirers still call them.

'I wanted him,' Mr. O'Kelly, of Timahoo, was saying, 'last autumn to join with us in a car, and come down to Baldoyle to th' autumn meetin'; but not he! Ah, Miss Carew, where's the use of his

life to a crature like that? 'Tis all nonsense!'

Christy looked at the speaker's great foolish, soddened countenance. His little wide-apart eyes were bent on her admiringly, as he watched the effect of his words. He had huge curly whiskers, which he caressed as he spoke with his kid-gloved left hand.

'Do you think so, Mr. O'Kelly?' she asked, very demurely, longing to laugh at the same time, and with difficulty restraining herself.

'I do, then; an' don't you, Miss Carew? What's the good of being in it at all, if we don't take our share of all's that's goin', sun be it or shade, in this poor little bit of a world. What a fool would I be now to be breaking me head as your friend Mr. Sugrue is this minute over the Law Reports, I daresay, instid of rejoicing me

haart in the light of your lovely two eyes, an' your bewitching smoile,' continued this exemplary gentleman of the long robe, turning his impudent little eyes full on hers.

Christy was about to make him an answer she had ready, when Mrs. Rochford, who had been eying Mr. O'Kelly from the ill-brushed back of his head down to the huge black silk stockinged calves of his Timahoo legs, made her an almost imperceptible signal with her chin. Christy knew well that she meant to convey by this her disapprobation of the gentleman aforesaid, and leaned forward a little so as to throw her voice well within hearing of Mrs. Rochford, and out of that of her cavalier.

'One moment,' she said, coaxingly.

Christy was quite as cognizant as Mrs. Rochford of Mr. O'Kelly's personal pe-

culiarities, but she loved fun, and Mr. O'Kelly was amusing her, and she was taking notes of his discourse wherewith to regale Lanty at breakfast next morning.

She turned again to the gentleman but, lo, he was gone. About two yards off his stalwart shoulders were observable, as he pushed and elbowed his way through the crowd towards a certain group of most distinctly R. C. characteristics.

Mr. O'Kelly had caught sight of the heiress of a wealthy wholesale dealer, who to-night had 'come out' under the auspices of a titled ex-lady mayoress, and had flown off instanter to procure an introduction from a mutual friend.

Christy burst out laughing.

'Who on earth was that awful creature? Really, Mr. Carew, I wonder you could let the girls know such a man!'—This was

from Mrs. Rochford—she said 'girls' on purpose. 'Who is he?'

The Crown solicitor laughed good-humouredly.

'One of the briefless many—a thorough-going blockhead. He'll get on though, I swear he will, by sheer force of impudence—like half the rest of them. The other day I heard of him. He had some beggarly little quarter-sessions case, and he was drinking with all the reporters he could get hold of to induce them to put his name in the papers.'

'You can always tell an R. C. man by his head,' whispered Mrs. Rochford to her sister; 'they never brush the backs of their heads, and the hair grows so queerly down their necks.'

Mrs. Carew, who was looking out for some military men on their return from

the buffets, and who, for once, was not in a critical humour, nodded good-humouredly without looking at her.

'One does know them somehow always,' went on Mrs. Rochford. She had a full rich voice, and liked to hear herself talk. 'Look at their women, superbly dressed, are they not? and look at their faces—over-eating, that's what makes them so ugly and coarse-looking. They have all more money than is good for them. Ugh! I never could bear them except as servants. I'll allow R. C. servants can't be done without.' Mrs. Rochford, since her own marriage, had assumed a tone of ascendency with her sister, whom she considered to have taken a step down in society by her perversion to the national creed. 'I see old General Venables looking ready to drop with fatigue away over there under that chandelier. I dare say he has for-

gotten even to take a glass of wine; and where are those horrid girls of his? Hid in some corner or other I dare say. That poor old man is to be pitied.'

'Yes, indeed he is. Odious girls those are to be sure!'

Mrs. Carew's tone took a sudden asperity, called forth not so much by the Miss Venables' unfilial conduct, as by the secession of her military admirers to another group.

'I don't think *we* ought to stay to the last—eh? Don't you think it time to go, Edward?'

Mr. Carew, whose patent leather shoes had been pinching him for some time, and who had on several occasions resisted a temptation to yawn, was only too pleased to accede to his wife's request.

Mrs. Rochford rejoined her own party

country people who were determined to see the last of the show, and Christy, with a half-sigh, took her father's right arm and moved slowly back through the long suite of rooms to the great staircase. There once more she met Mr. O'Kelly of Timahoo, exerting himself in behalf of the heiress for whom he had deserted Miss Carew.

In the presence of the Crown solicitor for Peatshire, the barrister thought it well worth his while to be again attentive and gallant. He did not know Mrs. Carew, who stared at him in a way that would have disconcerted any human being but himself. Nevertheless he looked at her with an expression of impudent admiration, which he judged would have the desired effect on her, and addressing Christy and her father simultaneously, demanded to be

informed if he could be of any service to her.

'Can I ordher your car'ge, Mr. Carew? Miss Carew, I hope you've enjoyed yourself. Your sisther, I suppose?'

This latter part of Mr. O'Kelly's speech was in an audible whisper, meant to reach the ears of its subject, and was accompanied by a most expressive glance in the lady's direction.

'Yes; I'll be obliged to you, Mr. O'Kelly,' replied Mr. Carew, who was amused, and at the same time pleased, at the compliment to his wife. 'Mrs. Carew will wait here, as there is such a draught below. Chris, stand close to me, we won't go further down till he gives the order.'

The O'Kelly flung himself down the stairs, and in a few moments Mr. Carew's carriage was announced. The ladies were

helped in in the O'Kellys' most courteous manner. He insisted on shaking hands with Christy, and squeezed her fingers and rolled his eyes at her through the window, till she burst out laughing almost without waiting for the carriage to take her out of earshot.

The humbug was so palpable, the interested motive so plain to view, and yet it pleased the two women notwithstanding. Dr. Johnson said to Bennet Langton that it was never merely an ill-natured speech that wounded him, but the evil intention and ill-will by which it was prompted. And so, conversely, the clumsy sham courtesies and mock gallantries with which this Timahoo barrister had baited his hook were taken at their proper value, but the intention to please, and the implied flattery that lay behind, were nevertheless gratifying to the recipients.

'Civil sort of wretch; but what a brogue, and what an appearance! I didn't catch his name.

Christy and her father were yawning, and did not answer.

CHAPTER VII.

'Wenn Zwei von einander scheiden,
So geben sie sich die Händ,
Und fangen an zu weinen
Und seufzen ohne End.'

'Wir haben nicht geweint,
Wir seufzten nicht "Weh!" und "Ach!"
Die Thränen und die Seufzer
Die kamen hintennach.'

HEINE.

IT was now well into February, and the Dublin season was in full swing. Christy got her due share of whatever was going on, and enjoyed herself heartily; but dances and

amusements had not the effect of making her forget one who indeed seemed rather to forget her, for it was now fully four months since she had seen Sugrue. Lanty vainly tried to induce him to come to the house. Sugrue obstinately refused; but he now and again sent a civil message to Miss Carew, of this Lanty seldom delivered more than a translation, the spirit of which was dictated by his own humour of the moment.

'What can be the reason of it? I have done nothing to him,' she asked herself. 'Why does he stay away like this?'

She determined she would make him come sooner or later. Something had happened which made her anxious to see Sugrue. This was that Mr. Dawson had transferred his attentions from Esther O'Neil to herself. Some one had told him that O'Neil would never allow his

daughter to marry a Protestant, and on ascertaining from the best authority that this was the fact, he at once, in the most business-like and straightforward manner, began to pay his addresses to Miss Carew.

She was at first amused, then perplexed and worried. Her first thought was to get hold of Sugrue and tell him all about it, partly as a good joke, and partly because she felt in need of an ally. She was tolerably lonely in the world, and she had a keen sense that she was very much in everybody else's way. It was a crowded house, and the means were not ample, nor were Mrs. Carew's ideas of management the best or most prudent. They got along well enough together, for the little lady was in the main kind-hearted, but Christy knew herself to be in the way ever since the day she came home from school. If she were out

of the house, the children would have a day nursery as well as a night nursery, and Mrs. Carew would have her step-daughter's allowance, in addition to her own, to dress upon. Ever so many advantages would accrue to the whole family therefrom, of which Miss Carew was fully as sensible as they were.

Of course, it was her father's house, and she had as good a right to be there as the children, but it did not prevent her wishing she were independent of them. And how could that ever be? Go and do something—earn a living for herself? It was some vague notion of this sort that had prompted her to take lessons in arithmetic from Sugrue, and he had laughed at the motive, which Lanty had one evening mischievously related to him. Teaching was not even to be thought of. Roman Catholic society does not allow that

teachers exist save in a convent. It would ruin her own prospects and injure her family's position. She might enter a convent any day she liked, renounce the world for the love of God, embrace poverty, chastity, and humility, and earn, if she had the talent perhaps, three hundred a year for the establishment. It is a hard and laborious means of getting a livelihood at the best, if even she fancied that mode of life; but she did not, and she could not for her life have told why, but the very thought of it made her uncomfortable all over. She visited the convents often enough with her step-mother, who of course was in high favour with their inmates; but from the moment she entered the gates a sort of stupor seemed to come over her, and she found nothing to say to the nuns beyond the most vapid and formal commonplaces. It was always a relief to

get out of the gates. The very air seemed different.

One Wednesday—Wednesday was Mrs. Carew's at-home day—she came downstairs dressed for the afternoon, and stopped on the landing outside her step-mother's room.

'Shall I, or not?' said Christina, addressing her cuff-button, with which she was busy at the moment.

The next moment she had tapped at the door. On hearing the permission given from within, she entered. Mrs. Carew looked at Christy's attire from head to foot.

'Come,' she said, dubiously, 'I rather like you in that black silk. And yet, I can't say—I fancy it's rather oldish.'

Christina pricked her ears. She was not accustomed to these kind attentions from Mrs. Carew, and at once put them down

to a certain motive. She had seen Esther's mother stroke and adjust her daughter's attire merely from the love of doing it. Every touch seemed a caress, and Christy had envied her friend each of them. For her there were no such loving cares and watchfulness; no mother took a pride in her good looks. It was not either that they went unnoticed. On the contrary, they were counted upon as a means of getting rid of her. She was aware of this, and acknowledged the justness and fitness of it; and she never for one moment pitied herself, or thought she had anything to complain of. She made, however, a pet of Elsie, the plain baby-girl, who ought to have been a boy, and did not drive her out of her room, whenever she strayed in there, nearly as often as she did her spoiled sister Minna; and perhaps this was the sign by which an outsider might perceive that Christina

did feel the want of sympathy and crave it for herself.

'What is up, I wonder?' she reflected to herself, submitting outwardly, though rebelling inwardly at all the pulls and twitches that Mrs. Carew bestowed on her dress.

'Turn round,' continued the lady; 'I don't know how your hair is arranged today.'

'Exactly as usual. Please don't touch it. Any other way is uncomfortable.'

Christy moved away to a secure corner by the window, and after a pause, which she spent in meditating as to the possible meaning of these attentions, she thought it as well to approach the subject of her visit.

'I was thinking,' she said, half closing her eyes, 'that we might have those Molyneux girls here on Sunday night.'

'H'm—yes. I see no difficulty,' returned Mrs. Carew. She was studying the

back of her head with a hand-glass. 'Why in the world do they not make hairpins the colour of one's hair? Those horrid black things will show.'

'And Mr. Sugrue has not been asked here for ages,' Lanty was saying; 'and those Nugents——'

'Nugents!' Mrs. Carew's face wore a frown which certainly had not been provoked by the mention of the Nugents' name. 'That means dancing, eh?'

Christina nodded, and raised her eyebrows interrogatively. Mrs. Carew frowned still more.

'You had better select a week evening then, if you want all those people. One cannot really give up all order and decency at once in this kind of way; dancing is bad enough, and I daresay they would want cards, too. One would need to have been brought up in this kind of way to be able

to stand it, though how anyone in your father's position could ever allow it, were it only out of consideration for the neighbours, I can't fancy. I should imagine this being spoken of as the O'Dowdas was in Kingstown, with *their* atrocious Sunday evening festivals.'

'Do you remember the Blakelys' Sunday evenings at Clontarf? I thought you did not disapprove of their way of spending it.'

This was said in a most calm, unimpassioned tone. The Blakelys were Galway county people, R.C. too, but of a class far above the trading, or even professional section of that communion—not nearly so far above them however as they imagined themselves to be, for in look, manner and voice there is no appreciable difference, nor could there be, for the two classes having been educated together. High-caste

Hindoos are not more jealous of their dignity than the tribes of the West.

Mrs. Carew flushed, and a waltz with a Captain Blakely suddenly presented itself to her mind. She quickly recovered herself, however, and retorted :

'Quite a different thing—quite. You only show your ignorance by attempting to compare the cases. The Blakelys are above the considerations that bind us.' The 'us' carried a huge significance. 'People of position, like them, who have lived so long on the continent, are enfranchised. Besides, they have the good taste to consult their guests' tastes on those occasions. Not, indeed, that I approve of it even with them. I do not.' Mrs. Carew finished up her speech with an emphatic self-righteous elevation of her brows.

'That cuts both ways, mamma. I mean what you say as to consulting your friends'

tastes, and if Esther and the Molyneux' girls, and the men of their set are to be here, I fail to see why they should not have music and a dance if they like. No one's taste will be outraged in any particular degree.'

'I have said that I will not allow dancing here on Sunday night. The Rochfords dine here. I am sure they would be shocked beyond all imagining. Lord Bunratty is so particular, and——'

Whatever Lord Bunratty was besides, Miss Carew never heard. The moment the august name was mentioned she seemed, by a curious coincidence, to see somebody passing on the other side of the Square. It was only a small boy, but this was pretext enough for turning her back and assuming an air of absorbed pre-occupation.

Nevertheless her stepmother went on talking, but in an indistinct tone; the

reason of this indistinctness being that she was busy powdering her face. Christy, who had given a glance over her shoulder ascertained this and turned again to the window thunderstruck. The fact was that she was shocked. Mrs. Carew saw this, and winced a little, but she pursued her operations with an affected calmness. Powder, cosmetics in general, but powder in particular, because it is the most noticeable of them all, are not considered *respectable* in Dublin, a place where 'respectable' is a most awful word. Christy had been taught in the convent to believe all personal adornment absolutely sinful. She had heard of a girl who 'scrupled' (that is the technical phrase), her back hair, which was only her own by right of purchase, and had made it a matter of confession, confessed it. And what on earth could possess Mrs. Carew.

It was not the fashion in Dublin. Nobody did it. As for the private circle at the Castle, people like them were above the laws, and 'if they choose to—to make guys of themselves——' Christy nearly said it aloud on taking another view of her stepmother, who had now finished operations, and was contemplating herself rather dubiously in the mirror. Mrs. Carew had dusted her eyelashes and eyebrows liberally, and looked very droll and very conscious of it.

'You look as if you had come out of a mill,' said Christina, in a natural tone, as if that was the obvious remark to be made. 'Not one of those people whom I saw the other evening wore it like that.'

'That was because it was in the evening,' observed Mrs. Carew.

'Possibly,' said Christina, dryly. 'At any rate, there was nothing to attract the

attention. I should like to have an opportunity of studying *them* in the morning.

With these words she went upstairs again to her own room, leaving Mrs. Carew to digest or reject them as she chose.

There was an old wicker chair in a corner by one of the windows, and Christina sat herself down there and meditated quietly for a few minutes.

'Who in the world could endure it?' she asked herself angrily. Then she turned to a work-basket, and fishing out of its multifarious belongings a tiny blue stocking, she inserted two of her left hand fingers into the foot and set to darning it. But that did not last long. The little blue stocking was speedily crumpled up and dropped back in the basket among the rest, and Miss Carew let herself fall back in her chair, and abandoned herself to a reverie, that lasted till

the children's nurse, Hannah, entered the room.

'Miss Christy,' she said, 'you're wanting below. And if you please, miss, have you any of the stockings ready? Miss Elsie wants that pair to wear with her blue dress this afternoon.'

'Nearly,' answered Miss Christy, taking up the stocking again. 'I wonder, Hannah, how it comes that I have to do all the children's sewing? That is your business.' She was running her needle in and out as she spoke. 'Wait for this; it is just ready.'

'You're looking dull, Miss Christy,' returned Hannah, not noticing the last remark. 'I wonder at you. You ought to go out and run about an' amuse yourself, you that has nothing else to do. Anyway, I think it is you do be reading too much.'

'Reading too much?' repeated the young

lady. 'Find my scissors. I think it is on the dressing table.'

'There it is, miss. You could do nothin' worse than readin,' a priest tol' me—'tis a sin—unless it is thinkin'; an' I see you thinkin' constant, Miss Christy. An' don' you know thinkin' is able to damn you.'

'Thinking!' Miss Carew stopped the needle and looked up.

'Yes,' continued Hannah, who was looking at herself in the glass, 'I have it from a priest—a missioner down in the country. "Reading is bad," sez he, "but thinkin'—thinkin'," sez he, "is able to damn you."'

'Very well. There is the stocking now. Did you say that anyone had come?'

'Yes, miss; didn't I tell you? The gentleman used to be here all last winter with Master Lanty—grinding him down, ye know. Mr. Sugrue.'

Christy gave her a look of indignation

and wonder blended, and flew off at once.

There was Sugrue, indeed, seated quite at ease, with his legs crossed and one muddy boot exalted in a defiant manner right opposite Mrs. Carew. Master of the situation, too, as usual. Christy saw that at a glance. Mrs. Carew was smiling much too sweetly, and turning her rings at the same time too fast not to be uncomfortable and ill at ease. Christy noticed also that the powder had disappeared. Her step-mother had indeed cleared it all off, save a little about her cheek-bones and her nose, which had a vexatious habit of marking the weather changes, and which now stood at frost—and even this she had rubbed off with her handkerchief directly that she heard Mr. Sugrue's name announced. She hated him thoroughly.

Christy wondered to herself what his

errand could have been, and what the pair had found to say to each other before she came down. What had brought him? Not to complain of Lanty. He never did that, and if he had anything to say on the score of his pupil, it certainly would not be to Mrs. Carew. He had not been in the house since Christmas Day, when he had dined with them as usual, and then had not paid her any more attention than he did usually to the other members of the family.

Christy did not contribute much to the conversation, but Mrs. Carew kept up a continual flow of small talk, uttered in her silkiest tones. Christy was thinking to herself of her promises to him, and of all her good resolutions. She had never gone to see Father Macklin, she had put off and put off proffering her services in his Sunday school in lieu of Esther O'Neil, who

had been obliged to give up her class. No, she had done nothing, or next to nothing, that she ought to have done.

She looked wistfully at him, but he only gave a hard look in return.

Presently the little river of commonplaces seemed to run thin and shallow, and to Christy, who was lost in a reverie, the silent intervals between its ripples grew larger and larger. Mrs. Carew had ceased turning her rings, and seemed at a loss what to say. Sugrue was extremely polite, yet seemed resolved not to aid her in any way.

Christy, after a minute and a half of dumb enjoyment got up to drive out a cat that had come upstairs unbidden. As she closed the door on the expelled cat she took a good look at him. There he sat, under the ticking French clock, with its blue enamel face, floral letters, and hands so thick and

elaborately ornamented that only close scrutiny and long experience could decide the hour by them. His face wore its customary equable expression, but though she did not see it, and would not have understood it if she had seen it, there was an anxious look in his deep-set grey eyes, and he smiled less than usual at Mrs. Carew's manufactured talk.

'A crowded Drawing-Room,' he echoed, 'and a dreadful mixture! Ah! in these days I should say that one was the inevitable consequence of the other.'

'I think the chamberlains are very wrong not to make closer inquiries as to the position of the people who leave cards at the Castle now. It is dreadful to think that there is no longer to be any social position observed.'

'I think,' Sugrue said, with a dry voice, but wearing his pleasantest smile, 'that

you are quite right, but I would propose another amendment. The chamberlains should have a sumptuary scale, and debar people whose incomes are below a certain sum, say fifteen hundred a year as the minimum. That would have a wholesome effect.'

Mrs. Carew, on whose conscience Madame Mandollette's bill lay heavy, betrayed her feelings only by a quiver of her nostrils, and a slight upraising of her eyebrows.

Christy, busily arranging the books and papers on a little table near her, flashed a look, at the same time surprised and approving, to the speaker.

He went on unconcernedly:

'To my mind that would really be the better plan of the two. I should hesitate to shut out people merely because of their social grade. In fact, from one point of view, I think it highly desirable

that they should be allowed to attend the Court. Nothing could be wiser than to encourage the trading classes in loyalty.'

'What makes you say that?' interposed Christy, a little captiously. 'I am sure I remember to have heard you sneer and gibe at the Castle, as an institution, over and over again.'

'They manage it badly. But for that matter I doubt if it could be adapted to fit the requirements of so poor a country as Ireland. People go who can't afford to do so honestly. Those who could and ought to, are always out of the country.'

'If you limited the attendance to those who have fifteen hundred a year,' said Mrs. Carew, 'how many of the professional classes would you have? do you think you would have even half a dozen barristers? I doubt it. You would certainly not have a dozen doctors. The

whole Court would consist of officials and the private circle. The German Courts were poor, and were not ashamed to avow it. It was only the English who saw anything ridiculous in their poverty, and laughed at it as they do at everything out of their own country. They are utterly without reverence for anything but money —mercantile, vulgar-minded set! And all people born and brought up in the mere mercantile world are alike—here as there.'

'Plenty of merchants go to the Castle; some shopkeepers' daughters, too,' ventured Christina.

'The shopkeepers' daughters have no business there."

'And just as little,' returned Miss Carew, 'have the Blood-Conlans, who cannot afford to keep a servant. They don't, Mr. Sugrue, even keep a servant, and their house is a most fearful place, never swept,

never cleaned, grass growing on the sashes of the windows, and—Mrs. Blood-Conlans and her two daughters go to the Drawing-Room every year.'

'They must be mad,' said Mrs. Carew, 'utterly mad, you know.'

'When first they came to Fitzdillon Street, from Galway—did you ever hear the story, Mr. Sugrue?'

Reassured by a 'No,' Miss Carew, whose sparkling eyes announced some drollery, continued:

'They came up to live in an old barrack in Fitzdillon Street — Castle Conlan having fallen down about their ears, I suppose—and one of the Protestant clergymen of the parish went to call on them. They had brought a servant with them, a barefooted bogtrotter—people said that she was a cousin of their own. However, she opened the door for Seymour Clarges. Family not

at home, of course; and he having just seen them distinctly in a window, he said to her, "Are you a Protestant?" "Oh no, shir," she replied; "I'm a holy Roman." Clarges was a horrid old gossip, and asked her if there were any other servants in the house—if *she* was the only servant they kept? "No, shir," she roared at him—she saw through him, you know—"we has—we's a butler an' a housekeeper, only they're both bedridden." Then she banged the door, and left him to digest her information on the steps.'

'Where did you hear such things?' asked Mrs. Carew, half disgusted, half amused.

'Lanty,' replied Christina. 'There's that cat coming in here again. Begone, puss!'

She saw that Sugrue was on the point of getting up to go, and she seized the opportunity presented by the intrusion of the

kitchen cat to remove herself from Mrs. Carew's observation and dart a significant look at him. He was standing now, with his hand outstretched to Mrs. Carew.

'Have you any commands for London, Mrs. Carew? I am going over this evening.'

She knew well she had nothing whatever in the way of commission for him, but she wanted—so rooted was her habit of vanity—to conjure up some semblance of gallantry into his offer—a merest *façon de parler* on his part, and adopted against his will by Sugrue, who was always honest, to announce his departure. So, forgetting the lesson of past time, she put on a fascinating smile, and turned her face a little sideways as if for recollection.

'Thanks, so much. There is that book of Mrs. Hastings. She lives at Croydon. If you would——'

'Croydon!' cried her stepdaughter, open-eyed. 'Why, book-post will be ever so much easier and'—here she burst into a fit of laughter—'quicker, I should say too. Mr. Sugrue lives in the Strand—do you not?'

She turned to him as she said this, but his gravity was impenetrable. Mrs. Carew paled first, then accepted the situation with a smile.

'Forgive me. Miss Carew is right, of course. I had forgotten the distance in London. Thank you, notwithstanding.'

Christina laughed again, but she was all the time far more ready to cry.

'How long do you remain away?'

She walked with him to the door.

'Three months or so,' he replied, opening it wide. 'Good-bye. Remember me to Lanty.'

He had seen Lanty only half an hour

before. Anything however for an exit.

'Good-bye,' said Christina, taking his hand, and whether the hand-grasp that Sugrue gave her had anything to do with it or not, she walked out the drawing-room door with him. She threw a quick glance over her shoulder as she did so, but she was not seen. Mrs. Carew never even thought of the civility of ringing the bell to have him shown out. She had buried herself in a new magazine.

'So you are going away for three months?' said Christina.

They had descended the stairs as far as the top of the first flight. A turn concealed them from the hall, and a glass case of rare ferns and a stand of plants afforded an excuse for loitering.

'Yes,' said Sugrue, grimly enough, and moving his feet nervously.

'I am sure you might as well, for all we see of you here. It's awfully unkind of you. Tell, me, are you angry with me?'

'No. Why should I be?'

Christy did not answer. She felt crushed, and she suddenly drew two sharp sudden little sighs, and looked wonderfully discontented; she even grew paler.

'I thought,' she said at last, nipping at a leaf beside her, 'that you might be vexed that I had not done what you recommended, or——'

'Stop that, I say,' said he, taking hold of the hand that was wounding the plant. 'Don't do mischief.'

He continued to hold her hand in his. A loud knock sounded at the door. Christy started back.

'That's Mr. Dawson, I know. Don't go yet, please. I was going to tell you

that I begin Esther's class at the Sunday school next Sunday—I do, indeed.'

'Well! What can I do for you in London?' That was all the answer he made her, and he began to move towards the stairhead.

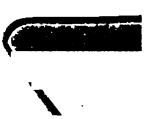
Matthew could be heard scurrying towards the hall-door below. Christy pouted and hung her head; she ascended one step up the flight leading to the drawing-room. Then she stopped, and leaning her hand on the balustrade, looked once more at him. The hall-door was open now and she heard Mr. Dawson's voice. So did Sugrue. He gave her an odd look, beseeching, commanding, almost threatening; then stooped suddenly and kissed the hand that lay on the balustrade, and the next moment was at the foot of the stairs, where he almost came into collision with the visitor who was coming up.

Christy, from above, heard a sonorous 'How do you do?' exchanged, then turned and flew upstairs, two and three steps at a time, just as the new comer's black hat was rising to her level. She went into the back drawing-room, which was curtained off from the other, and hid herself in the window to recover her composure. She heard Mr. Dawson in the front room discuss the weather, and then, from that congenial topic, pass to inquiries for herself, and she shrunk closer to the window, and vowed not to go into the room while he remained there. She felt the heavy velvet curtain ruffling her hair and paid it no attention. What did she care now. January, February, March—this was the eighteenth of January — eighteenth of April, then it would be well into spring, and nearly summer, thought she, as she looked down into the black little garden, where

Merivale was strolling up and down between the privet hedges with the two children.

'Everything would look different then,' said Christy to herself, surveying the gloomy sky of ribbed grey, of which only a small expanse was left visible by the tall houses round about. A sparrow flew out of the sooty ivy on the wall beside her. She followed it in its flight over the wall, and sighed.

'Lucky for Sugrue—it is only men and birds that can go where they like.' The sigh became a shiver, for there was a north wind that presaged snow, and the sashes of the window let it in. 'Three months!' repeated Christy. 'I am quite sure he will write.'

END OF VOL. I.

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